argosy

/ctober

12 VIVID NEW STORIES

Including

Len Deighton Hemingway Ray Bradbury

Australia 3/6 New Zealand 3/6

argosy

Vol. XXV No. 10 **Cover by Robb** **OCTOBER 1964**

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OVER NOW TO YOU...

WE'VE always been addicted to those slightly dishevelled streets found on the outskirts of country towns, which are full of unusual emporia—saddlers, for instance, and bookbinders, timber merchants, sign-painters—shops that specialise in rare birdseed or recondite ironware.

We were in such a street recently, and had just passed an establishment called Guermontez Bros., Fencing Experts. Disappointingly, the Guermontez brothers (surely they should have been frères, if not hermános?) stocked posts and wire, not rapiers, masks, and épées. Beyond them, however, was a promising dusty window full of wood samples, over which ran the legend: BEETLE AND DRY ROT CENTRE.

For some time we have been concerned over the depredations of a little creature that is munching its way through the pages of the Argosy bound volume for 1882, so that a serial called *Mrs. Raven's Temptation* bears an unintentionally censored appearance . . .

> Mrs. Raven rose, looking very weary. " I am xxxx " she confessed.
>
> " We are all fairly xxxx out," xxx Philip.
>
> " Whatever will my husband think xxxxx? "
>
> But before she had finished whispering this, while they were yet xxxx breathlessly together, a piercing shriek rang out from somewhere in the house . . .

The Beetle Centre seemed to promise a solution to this problem, so we pushed open the door and went in. A stately man with moustaches, somewhere between a Colonel and an Old Retainer, was speaking on the telephone.

" What sort of noise, madam? " he was saying. " Did it sound like this? "

He tapped: dash, dash, dot, dot, dot, dot, with his pen on the metal desk.

" No, not like that! " the telephone quacked.

" Like this, then? " Dot, dot, dot, dot, dash, dot, dot, dot.

" No, not like that."

" What *did* it sound like, then, madam? " he said patiently.

The telephone burst into a violent stridulation, to which he listened attentively, and at length pronounced, " What you have there, madam, is the mating cry of the Death Watch Beetle. I will see that you are sent the necessary literature."

With that he rang off and directed an inquiring look at us. We explained our trouble.

" Hm," he said. " It might be anobium. On the other hand it might be ptinus or atropos. Have you brought any specimens with you? "

Unfortunately we had to confess that we were not supplied with any chapters of Mrs. Raven, so he dismissed us with a sheaf of literature and a small canister of powder, plus instructions to return if this did not seem to have any effect.

A short way farther along the street, we noticed a private house with a card pinned to the gate.

CHRISTIAN CHARITY WEEK, it said in large staggering script. *Stick Insects, 4 for 3d. Stag Beatles, 8d. each. Make nise pets. Long-horned Beatles, 5d. per dozen. Bring Own Jar.*

Guiltily we tossed our can of insecticide into the nearest litter-bin. Live and let live; charity begins at home . . .

Bookworms Available for Argosy Readers
at Special Rates.
Make Nise Pets.
Invaluable for disposing of old news-
papers, yearbooks, correspondence, etc.
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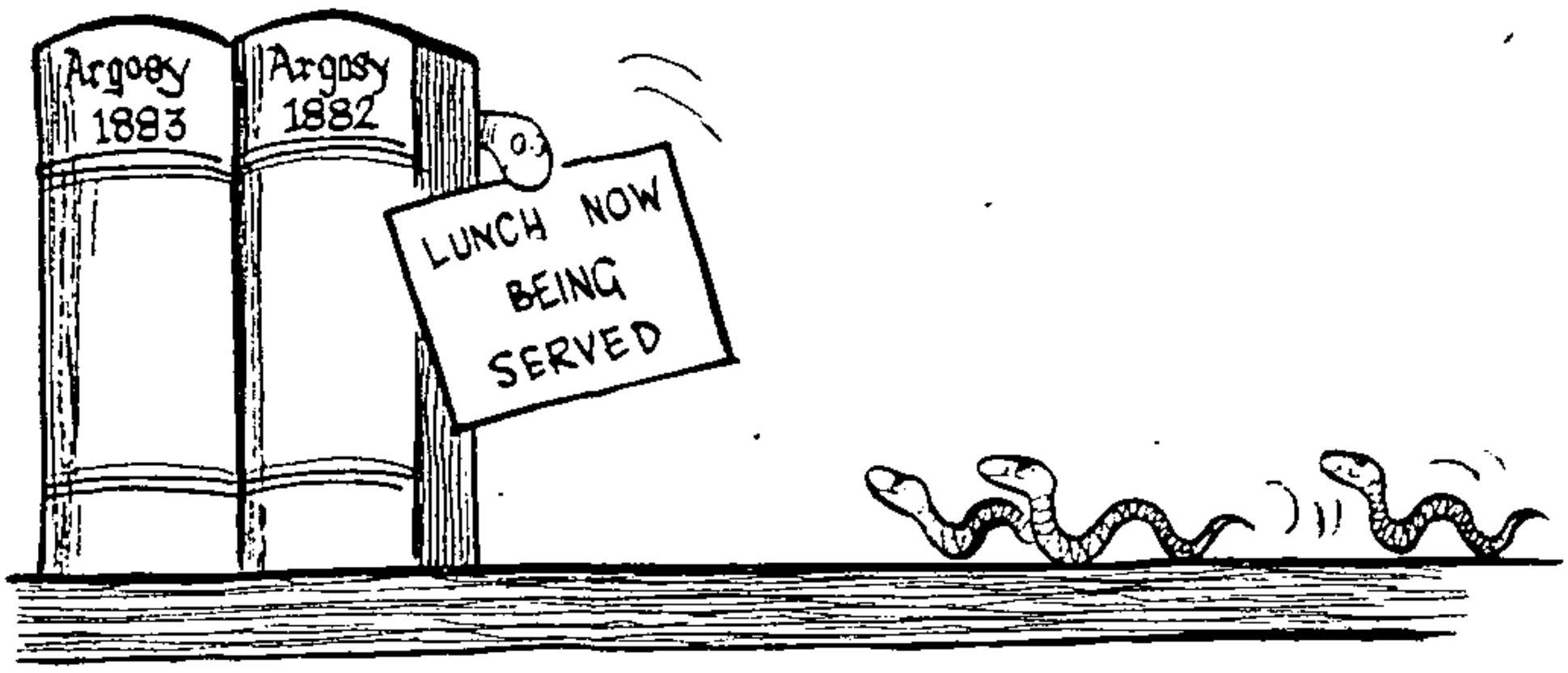
The Back-room Boys



A shadow of fear swept his face

RELEASE

BY HARRY MARK PETRAKIS

HE came home in the spring after ten years in prison. He had been convicted for armed robbery when he was twenty years old. On the day of his release he walked out of the great iron gates and his brother, Brian, was there to meet him. They shook hands quietly and got into the car and started the drive back to the city.

The road ran between wide stretches of level farmland. For a while he stared out of the window of the car unable to conceive of a world not encircled by a wall. He had a sense of floating in space, suspended between heaven and earth.

"Must feel strange," Brian was saying, "stepping outside for the first time in ten years."

"Yes," Alex said.

They entered a patch of woods, the road winding beneath a row of red maples. All at once he could smell the scents of spring, the wild sweet aroma of new leaves and new flowers that had teased him faintly each spring he had been in prison.

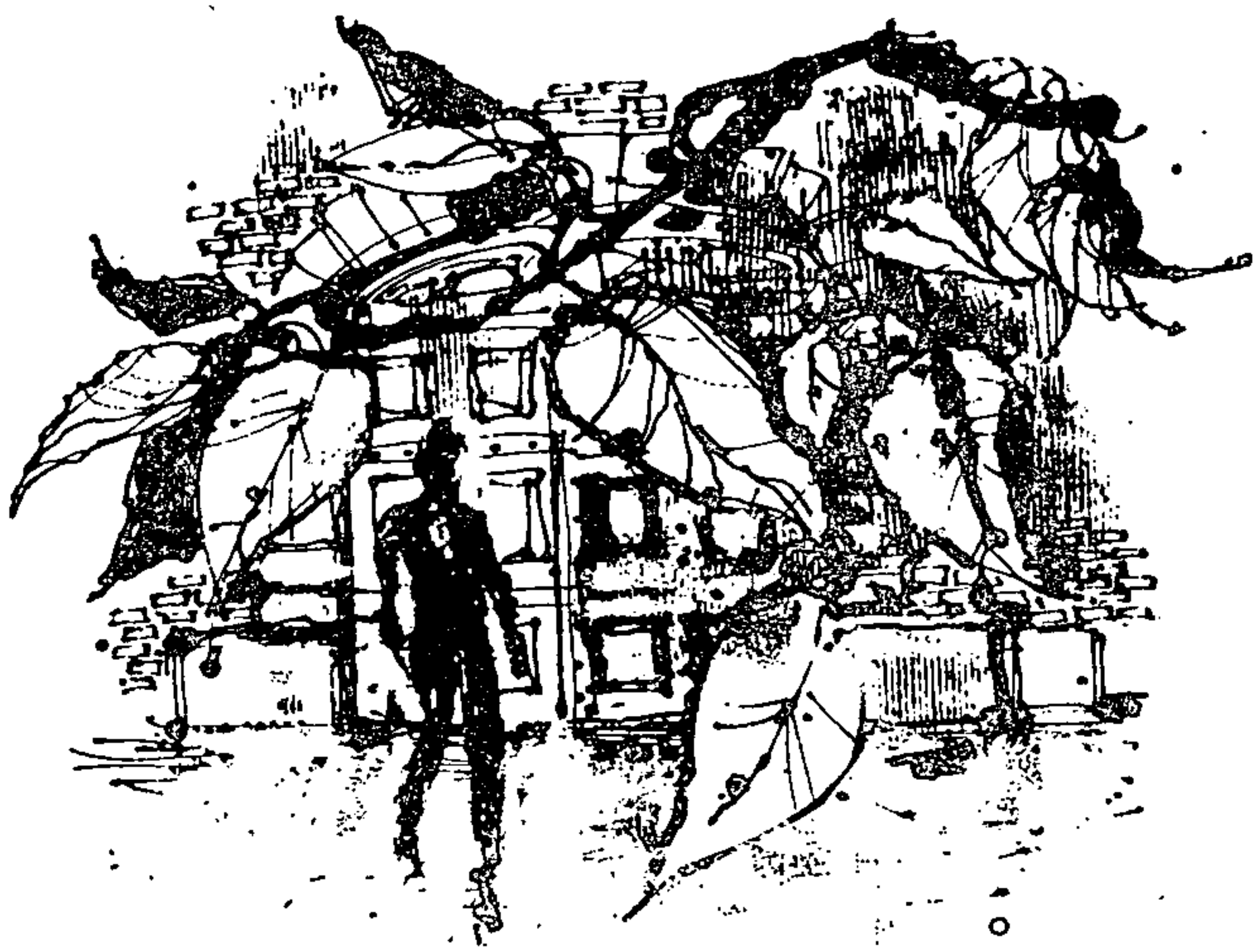
"Listen, Alex," Brian said and there was a tension in his voice. "I came alone to give us a chance to settle our scores before you see Ma and Pa. If there are any bones between us I wanted us to pick them clean before we got you home."

"Thanks for coming to get me," Alex said. "We got no bones to pick."

Brian was silent for a moment, his big hands tight around the wheel. He had grown a little fat, looked prosperously well-dressed in a fine felt hat and tailored tan coat. There was a trace of jowl hanging beneath his cleanshaven chin.

"I hope that's true," Brian said finally. "I know it's been hard on you but it's been no picnic for us. I got some things in mind for you. We'll talk about that later on."

"How is Lucy?" Alex asked.



" Fine," Brian said with forced heartiness. " Getting plumper like me and just as sassy as ever. The kids are fine, too. You wouldn't know Vicki. She'll be eleven this summer. Blonde soft hair like her mother."

" Are they waiting with Ma and Pa? "

Brian frowned a moment. He kept looking straight ahead. " They couldn't come," he said. " The baby was running a slight fever. Lucy wanted to come and welcome you but I told her there would be plenty of chance to see you later on when we had you to the house for dinner."

" Sure," Alex said.

Brian looked at him uneasily. " Listen, Alex," he said. " I wouldn't blame you if you held a grievance about my not coming to see you all these years. But you got to understand my side, too." For an instant a shadow of fear swept his face, as if he were afraid that Alex might become angry, might become violent. Ten years in prison among savages might have made him savage.

" I had Ma and Pa and Lucy and the kids to think of. I hadn't been with Bellows more than a year when you were sent away. People are damn small and anxious to believe the worst." He waited for Alex to say something. When the silence grew longer he cleared his throat glumly and went on. " I had Ma and Pa to think of. I been giving them a little money every month. Pa doesn't make much at the mill with the short week. He's due to retire in a couple of years. It wouldn't have helped them if I came to see you just because I really wanted to and had trouble at work. It's different now since I've become

assistant to Drosethus, the marketing vice-president. I've got my own office on the thirtieth floor with the brass." A tone of aggressive pride entered his voice. "I think that's pretty good for thirty-eight."

They entered the outskirts of the city, passing small plants and factories, shacks and railroad crossings. "You were a wild kid," Brian said. "Nobody could tell you anything. You wouldn't listen to any of us till it was too late." He made a futile gesture with his shoulders. "I know you've paid for whatever you did. I know it's been hard for you. Maybe I should have come and seen you. Ma will never forgive me for that. But I just want you to understand my side."

"I have no grudge," Alex said quietly. "Maybe I did have, the first few years, putting the blame on everyone except where it belonged, on myself, but I've got no grudge now."

"Honest to God?" Brian asked.

"It's the truth," Alex said. "Too many cons go nuts brooding about people outside. I learnt the only way to make it was by settling down and doing my own time."

"By God, that's great!" Brian said with relief. "That's good to hear." He shook his head. "I don't mind telling you I've been a little worried. Don't get me wrong. I was glad to see you coming out but you hear about the contacts a fellow makes inside a prison and how he thinks of getting easy money when he gets out. But you don't sound like that at all. I'm going to do all I can for you. Don't worry about that."

"Ma and Pa all right?"

"They're both waiting anxiously for you," Brian said. "Pa doesn't like to show it but he's jumpy. When did you see him last?"

"He came to see me last month," Alex said. "Ma came for two visiting days after that."

"Celena come out to see you often?" Brian asked with a slight smirk.

"I tried to get her not to come," Alex said. "She came every couple of months anyway and wrote me every week, too."

"She never married," Brian said, "and I don't think she's ever gone out with another guy either. The folks figure she's been waiting for you."

"You don't expect a girl to wait ten years," Alex said and the words came tight from his flesh. "You don't ask a girl to give up ten years waiting for a con to do his time."

"Maybe she had nothing better to do," Brian shrugged. "Her family doesn't give her any reason to put on airs. Her

old man still drinks like a fish and can't hold a job more than a few months. If it weren't for Celena working at the library, I don't think her kid brother and the old man would eat."

They crossed the bridge over the river. Below them on the water the long glistening ore boats unloaded at the piers. They entered the shadow of the mills, the great dark buildings with gabled roofs looming above narrow shabby streets with decrepit, unpainted frame houses. Around a corner tavern, under a chipped and faded beer sign, a group of slim-hipped, leather-jacketed youths lounged in lazy and careless arrogance.

Alex felt a quick unrest as if he were suddenly seeing the ghosts of the youths he had known. But this was another generation of wise punks. The wild ones he had searched for excitement with were gone. There was Gus still in prison, Nick dead at twenty-four by a bullet from a watchman's gun, Tony married with three kids, settled down and working a shift in the mills. And there was Gino, wilder than all the rest, who had become a priest with a parish somewhere in the east.

The fast, good-looking girls were gone too, married, their figures probably shapeless with the bearing of too many children. Several of them had written him once or twice when he was first sent up but they stopped after a few months. Only Celena kept writing and that seemed strange to him because she had never really been a part of their crowd. She had been a slim, pale-cheeked girl that always looked scared, her big black eyes watching him constantly, although he never paid her any special attention.

She kept writing him long after the other girls had stopped and he was puzzled but grateful too. She came to see him with cookies she had baked. She went to see his mother often.

After a while he understood that Celena loved him. He needed her love and at night thought about her and began to love her too. But when he considered the lost years, the years of waiting for them both, he was filled with despair and asked her not to come to see him or write him again. But she wrote and waited in spite of that.

"Won't be long now," Brian said, "and we'll be home."

They drove into one of the narrow streets off Burly Avenue, a street blocked at the end by the north fence of the mills. The houses here were frame as well, and built close together, so that the shingle roof of one touched the roof of another. The gardens were small, bordered by flagstone and rock. They pulled up before a house in the centre of the block and his father was sitting in a wicker chair on the porch. When he saw

their car he rose excitedly and called inside. Then he came to the edge of the steps.

Alex hesitated a moment in the car. Brian gave him a nudge. "Go ahead, boy," Brian smiled. "This is home."

Yes, this is home, Alex thought. And I have been gone for ten years. I return like the prodigal son and they will open the door of their house for me to enter. There will not be the partition in the visitor's room of the prison to shield me from the sight of their shame and despair. He got out of the car and as he walked towards the porch he felt a wild urge to flee.

"Hullo, son," his father said. He spoke gruffly to conceal his emotion because he had never been one to display his feelings. He felt restraint to be a sign of manliness. He was dressed in a shirt and tie that he wore awkwardly, the collar pulled loose around his throat. He extended a rough-palmed and big-fingered hand in a solemn and earnest welcome to his son.

"Alex!" he heard his mother's cry. She came quickly through the doorway from the house, wiping her hands on a towel that she flung away just before she reached him.

He held her tightly in his arms. He felt her trembling joy riot sadly through his own flesh. There was the fragrance of the kitchen about her, the aroma of flour and warm bread that he remembered as a child. She caught his hand and kissed his fingers. His father looked away frowning.

She had aged incredibly in ten years. Over the years in the visitor's room of the prison he had not marked the degree of her decline. Now he saw the extent of change. And he understood how much the years had burdened her. He remembered how at the end of their prison visits they had briefly embraced and then he had to open his mouth and expose the palms of his hands to the guard on the platform to show she had passed nothing to him. And each time she watched, unable to understand how after holding her son he would have to open his mouth and spread his hands as if there were something evil in their embrace.

Brian came up on the porch. "Well, I brought him home," he said. "And I tell you he's changed. He's grown up." He nodded vigorously. "Everything is going to be all right."

"Alex, come into the house," his mother said and tugged gently at his sleeve, smiling through her tears. "There is someone else waiting to see you too."

He knew it was Celena. He wished they did not have to endure their first meeting in the presence of his family. But she was there and the moment had to be faced. He followed his

mother in the door. His father and Brian came after him. In the hall, within the circle of the painted walls and the scrubbed bare stairs, Celena waited.

"Hullo, Alex," she said quietly. Her pale, slightly moist cheeks were untouched by rouge and her lips bare of lipstick as if they might be thought too festive. Her dark fine hair was brushed back simply and her large black eyes stared at him with a grave and measured joy.

"Hullo, Celena," he said. He bent and kissed her lightly on the mouth, feeling the trembling that swept her lips.

"Call that a kiss?" Brian cried. "Is that the kind of a kiss a fellow has for his girl after all this time? That isn't the brother I remember." He laughed in a shrill display of good humour.

There was an uneasy silence for a moment. Celena drew back slightly in a furtive retreat. Alex tried to smile and felt his lips draw stiffly about his teeth. His mother moved closer to the two of them and formed a bridge between them. "You must be hungry," she said to Alex. "I fried two whole chickens. There are warm brown buns, the ones you liked so much, and Father bought a pint of fresh honey this morning."

"How about that?" Brian beamed. "Boy, she's really giving you a welcome. I haven't had Ma's fried chicken in months."

"It sounds fine," Alex said.

"Stay and eat with us, son," his mother said to Brian.

"I wish I could," Brian said earnestly. "I just wish I could, but the baby is running a little fever and I better be getting back. Lucy may need something from the store." He clasped Alex's shoulder firmly. "You're home now, boy," he said gravely. "You're back where you belong." He spoke with solemn authority before the others. "We'll have that talk in a few days to help you get started on the right foot. Now just get some of Ma's good food under your belt and take it easy." He winked slyly at Celena. "You look after him, you hear?"

He kissed his mother on the cheek and waved them good-bye. He left the house, walking with long rapid strides, as if afraid one of them might call him back before he could get away.

The hour they spent eating dinner was quiet and subdued. They talked a few spare words but mostly ate in silence. Celena tried to cover the silences, talking nervously of her work in the library. Now and then his father cleared his throat and mentioned a millman that Alex might remember, that had died or moved away. His mother sat and watched him with tender

eyes. There was a tenseness at the table because they were trying not to touch upon the time in prison, as if they might take up exactly where they were when he had been sent away. His father forgot once and started to describe a crime programme he enjoyed watching on television until he saw his wife's white face and fell foolishly silent.

At the end of the meal his mother rose and came to where he sat. She put her arms around his neck and hugged him, holding his head tightly against her breast.

"Mother," his father said uneasily.

"I don't care," she said and her voice was a wound. "It's so good to have him home, at my table, so good to feel him in my arms." Then as if she had spoken too much, she let go of him quickly. She kept her back turned to him and he knew she was trying to compose herself.

When she turned to face them she managed a smile. "Now I tell you what you can do," she said. "You and Celena take a walk. Walk over to the park. Father will help me with the dishes and when you come back we will have coffee and cake."

He made no protest, although he dreaded being alone with Celena yet. They rose together from the table and walked from the house. They started down the street in the twilight, entering the first slow fall of darkness. The plaintive voices of hidden children cried across the shadows. And he tasted again on his lips the smoke and dust of the mills, the fine black powder that covered the world when he was a child.

Celena walked a little stiffly beside him, her leg now and then brushing his leg, her arm lightly touching his arm.

"Would you like to walk to the park?" she asked.

They crossed the street and he took her arm. They passed the large grey church of St. Mark's and entered the stretch of park.

The scents of spring were sharper within the ring of trees, the night more fragrant, and he heard the song of concealed birds. She moved closer against his arm. He knew she expected him to kiss her, would be hurt if he did not, so he paused and touched her chin lightly with his hand and raised her head. He put his lips upon her mouth and heard her anguished and muffled cry of joy. She flowed against him, moved upon his body, and he felt her loneliness and her love and then they were apart.

He trembled at the stirring of desire that swept his body, a strange twisting hunger resurrected from the tomb of the years it had been denied. She huddled against him as if seeking a refuge to quiet the pounding of her heart. He understood she

thought he trembled for the same reasons that had shaken her, for their being joined together after all the cold and lonely years.

"O God, it's been so long," she whispered. "It's been so long. All the days I have prayed and waited. All the nights I cried useless tears. It's been so long."

"It's been ten years," he said, and a strange numbness gripped him. He felt suddenly that he wanted to be back in prison, back behind the wall, and the senselessness of that added to his confusion.

"I know," she said fiercely, and her voice rose in the dark. "Ten years are two words, two words easy to say, but ten years are three thousand bitter nights and ten lovely springs without love."

"I asked you not to wait," he said. "Ten years is too long for anyone outside to wait."

"I love you," she said. "I would have waited longer."

"Men change in prison," he said. "You can't know what it's like."

"I will make you forget," she said.

"How can we forget ten lost years?"

"I have ten years of love stored up," she said.

"Celena," he cried out. "In God's name, listen."

He felt her tense suddenly beside him. In the silence that settled then between them he heard the faint eerie whistle of the crane in the slab mill.

"Ten years is a long time," he said more quietly. "It is a long time when a man is free. It is eternity when a man is in prison."

She was still, not moving, and he thought she was holding her breath. "I know I can make you happy," she said and there was a frantic edge to her voice. "I know I love you enough to make you forget."

"You can make a man forget," he said, "but can you bring a man back from the dead?"

"You are not dead," she said. "What are you saying?" She drew closer to him and in the beam of a lamp across the walk he saw her pale face cut into strips of shadow and light. "How can you say you are dead?" she asked again. "You came home today. You held your mother in your arms. You kissed me. Did you feel nothing then?"

"Like it is all a dream," he said. "Like I will wake up soon and find myself back behind the wall, locked again in my cell."

"It will take time," she said.

"It will take more than time," he said. "I knew that from

the moment Brian picked me up outside the gate. He is afraid of me, ashamed of what I am, and he is right. And my mother does not really know me now. She thinks of me still as her young son; she thinks ten years can be erased by not mentioning them."

"They love you," she said and her voice had suddenly grown faint and thin. "Love is what you need and the rest will come."

"I don't know," he said. "I'm not sure. I know that I'm confused and afraid. I will have to find the world again, find myself, come to terms with myself."

"Alex," she said, and he felt her drawing back. "Alex, do you love me?"

"All these years I thought of you," he said. "I wanted to be free to be with you. But now I feel numb inside. I don't know what it is. I don't know if I can feel love any more."

"You should be able to love," she said, and there was a stunned quietness in her voice. "That alone has kept me from going mad. If you don't have love, what else is there?"

"I know," he said and rubbed his hands across the rough wool of his suit. "I know."

She was silent again and he could hear the uneven rise and fall of her breathing. Somewhere a wind rose, a slight fluttering movement of air that blended the scents of spring and the smells of the mill.

"O God," she said softly. "O God."

He tried to take her in his arms and she pulled away. "Let me go, Alex, please," she said. She stood wavering as if undecided which way to walk, as if she had suddenly lost all purpose and direction.

"Celena, don't leave me now," he pleaded. "Listen to me. Let me try and tell you what it was like and why I am afraid. Celena, in the name of God, listen to me."

She wavered a moment longer and kept her face turned from him. He spoke quickly against her back.

"You don't know," he said. "Nobody who has not been locked up for years in such a place can know. Man was not made for prison, to be locked away in tiny cells behind a wall of stone. If that were true why should he have been given the earth to roam, the sky and the rain and the snow? He would be better dead."

He tugged urgently at her arm to bring her closer. "Celena, please listen," he said. He drew a deep shaken breath. "The day is a bell in the cell-house dawn. You march to eat, back to your cell, back to eat, and back to your cell. Once a week you march to the commissary for cigarettes and candy, once a week

to the hall for a movie, once a week to a bathhouse for four minutes under a shower with guards watching all the time. Twice a week you march for a shave, once a month for a haircut, and twice a month down the guardhall to the visitor's room. Each night you are marched back to your cell. The lights go off. The long night begins."

He spoke rapidly with the words tumbling cold from his lips. "When I was a kid I hated the mills," he said. "I grew up living in the bush under their dirty shadow. I hated the dust that covered everything. I hated the sight of the men like my father who spent their lives trudging in and out of those gates with battered lunch pails. I had a vision of a fast fine life instead." He shook his head in bitter recall of his strutting visions. "I was a punk when I was sent to prison, a cocky hoodlum who thought I could take what I wanted and damn the price. But the nights in prison made me grow up fast. At night the men in the cells remember the women they have left, they remember their families, and the world they knew outside. They have nightmares and scream. Some pray and some curse God. In the night, too, some men go mad and try to hang themselves or beat out their brains against the stone of their cell walls."

He felt her shudder but he would not stop. The words came bitten from his flesh.

"There is also love in prison," he said, "if you are mad enough to call it that. It is the love of men who are denied women, so their hungers turn to those others who take the part of women and bear the names of women and are known as women. They court them and fight over them and knife each other for their favours."

The wind rose again. The smells of the mills came sharp again. A far off sliver of moon tore the dark sky. His voice grew heavy and low.

"Time passes," he said. "Men change in prison. Some stay alive on hate and can feel nothing else. Some get burnt out and can feel nothing. Young men grow old fast, they change inside, become hollow, aren't sure of who they are, of what they want. When it is time for them to leave they walk out of the gates as if they are ghosts, not sure of anything, scared of the strange world and of the people outside the wall. They feel as if their bodies are a coffin carrying the corpse of wasted years. They remember then the grim old cons who keep coming back because the years have bound them to prison, because it is the only world they know. They keep coming back for longer terms, burnt-out old cons, waiting only to die and be buried in

the prison cemetery, secure then inside the walls for eternity."

When he finished the night hung glittering and still. The wind rose again and swept their faces. They were both silent for a long time. Then she reached up slowly and touched his cheeks with the tips of her fingers. She touched his eyes and his lips in a gentle and soothing caress.

"I too grew up in the bush," she said, "under the shadow of the mills. And I remember you, the way you laughed, how unafraid you were, and how full of life. You never knew, but I loved you even then." She made a short sharp gesture of remorse. "The ten years are gone," she said. "That can never be changed. Let us say that once more and not say it again. Then let us only speak of the years ahead." She brushed her lips consolingly against his cheek. "We both expect too much at the beginning. It is too soon. We have been in prison, you and I, your prison worse than my own, but we are both free now."

She paused and rested her forehead against his throat and moved her head in a silent grieving motion from side to side. "Help me," she said. "Let me help you. Let us help one another, in small ways at first, in bigger ways later on."

She looked up at him with her eyes glistening in the thin moonlight. "It is spring," she said. "The first spring that we are together. It is the season of life. The first clumps of violets bloom in the vacant lots. The old men limp to the parks to warm their bones in the sun. It is spring, my darling."

"Celena," he said and he was filled with a strange wonder before her devotion. She put her fingers quickly to his lips.

"Don't say anything now," she said. "Don't say a word. I will help you. I am more sure of that than ever before. We will help each other. We will walk across the city in the spring. We will walk to the lake and look out across the water. We will watch the sun rise over the roofs of houses and watch the sun set over the peaks of trees. And you will have me beside you in the night, the long dark night, and you will not need to be afraid of night any more."

He was silent for a long moment, enduring the vision, testing it within his heart. He did not know whether what she said would come true but he had no more wish to flee. Her faith assailed him, her love rekindled his own. He felt a deep gratefulness in his body.

He took her arm and they started from the park. They held tightly to one another as if to seal their bond. In that way they walked through the bursting spring night back into the city.

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Miss Protheroe's thoughts were very refined

VIVE LA DIFFERENCE

BY JOHN MOORE

YOU would never have believed it of Miss Protheroe. You would not have thought her capable of anything so decisive as the deed she did upon that Sunday morning before the village was awake. For she was such a mousy little woman; wouldn't say boo; timid and defensive in her trim thatched cottage with its garden prim as she was, and a notice on the garden-gate, *No Hawkers* because she was afraid of them, whatever they might be hawking.

She was also afraid of big dogs and loud motorbikes and gipsies and destructive children and men singing on the way home from the pub and of anything in the nature of Goings On. Indeed, the only time she ever ventured to express an opinion at the Women's Institute meeting, which she went to every month, was when she whispered, faint and chirrupy as a mouse in the grass, her disapproval of the Goings On in the new bus shelter that had been put up opposite the post office. The boys and girls went there after dark and played transistor radios and small amorous games, and tickled and squeaked, sometimes got up to mischief which they could have got up to much more discreetly in the woods behind the village or on the springy bouncy turf of Brensham Hill. But for their own mysterious reasons they preferred the bus shelter, where they also chalked on the walls such statements as *Billy Bradshaw goes with Sally W.* and drew hearts pierced by Cupid's arrows.

Miss Protheroe was naturally against all this, and apprehensive of what it might lead to. "I think we should nip it in the bud," she said at the Women's Institute meeting; but so quietly that Madam President had to ask her to say it again.

"I only said . . . er . . . perhaps . . . oughtn't we to nip it in the bud?"

Because some of the women heard it twice, the phrase stuck in their minds; and later, as you shall see, they had apt occasion to recollect it . . .

Miss Protheroe's garden exactly reflected her personality. Nothing ever rampaged in it. The flowers were polite, pastel-coloured, faint-scented. The aromatic herbs by the back door were kept in order, snipped and nipped if they showed the least sign of becoming obstreperous. Upon the tiny lawn nor daisy nor dandelion dared to show its head.

How different from the garden next door—where Mr. Toombes had let things go so that the place was a wilderness of dark dank evergreens, and evil weeds like woody nightshade, and once-tame flowers run wild like the boys and girls in the bus shelter, lax lupins, degenerate delphiniums, and honesty seeding itself everywhere in the shade, and scattering its seeds into Miss Protheroe's borders so that she tut-tutted, "*Honesty*, indeed! More like *Dishonesty*, if you ask me!"

Mr. Toombes made the excuse that he never had time. He was a Funeral Furnisher who worked in Cheltenham, where in those days there was a lot of death because old soldiers went to die there. The colonels and majors and captains, half-kippered by curry, their livers hobnailed by chota-pegs, settled in the salubrious town, and came soon into the capable hands of Mr. Toombes and were buried. He left Brensham village each day by the earliest train and came back by the latest one. No time for gardening save at the weekend; and what could you do with a wilderness in a weekend? So he let Nature have her way in his garden; until the time of his retirement.

Then, it was Miss Protheroe who urged him to tidy things up; who chirruped and whispered and breathed into his ear—oh, so diffidently—her ideas of how Order might come out of Chaos. Spray the nightshade, ruthlessly; uproot the honesty; dig up the dandelions; lop the laurels, grub up those gloomy yews, discipline the box-bushes, trim this, trim that, let in the light at last . . .

But Mr. Toombes was, by nature, funereal. He liked his evergreens. He clung to them perhaps because their dull green was perpetual. They didn't die away in a sunset blaze like a man's last hopeless passion each October; they didn't, like deciduous trees, remind you how old you were when they renewed themselves with little fresh buds in the spring. The evergreens matched Mr. Toombes; and whatever good advice Miss Protheroe might whisper, he was determined to retain them.

He got rid of the nightshade, dealt with the dandelions, managed

even to produce a sort of shaggy semblance of a lawn, that always looked a bit mangy like the tomcats which Miss Protheroe dreaded because the terrible urgency of their caterwauling intruded into her chintzy enclave like a bull into a china shop. But he insisted on keeping the sable cypresses, the box-bushes, and the yews among which a tawny owl hooted every night; giving Miss Protheroe the shudders because of an old superstition that a hooting owl meant someone was going to die.

Mr. Toombes had always insisted that he liked the owl; and well he might, since people dying were more or less his bread-and-butter, as you might say. But Miss Protheroe was almost as frightened of death as she was frightened of life, and she simply hated the sinister invisible owl that dwelt in her sad dark trees.

"Perhaps . . . now you're retired . . ." she breathed one morning to Mr. Toombes, "you might find time to prune them just a little? Look at that box-bush, all out of shape, I don't know what it reminds me of—a hideous old crow with a long beak."

"I've often wondered what it was meant to be," said Mr. Toombes. "Once upon a time somebody must have trimmed it into the shape of *something*."

"Of course! And the cypresses," said Miss Protheroe. "And some of your nasty old yews. Look at those two on either side of your front door—Grecian urns they must have been, before they were let grow all tufty and shaggy."

"What do they call it?" said Mr. Toombes. "Toxicology or toxophily or something?"

"No, that's poisons and archery," said Miss Protheroe, who spent a lot of her time doing crossword puzzles. "Topiary is what you mean."

"Well, I daresay topiary was all right when you could get a gardener for a shilling an hour."

"You might have a go at it yourself," said Miss Protheroe, with a faint hope that she could persuade him to trim up those trees. "You might make a start on that box-bush; see if you can trim it back into a peacock. I'm sure it was a peacock when my aunt lived here and I used to stay with her."

Mr. Toombes grizzled and grumbled. Waste of time, he said, and there was nothing like clipping to make your wrists ache, and he'd have to use a step-ladder, and heights made him giddy.

Nevertheless, four days later, Miss Protheroe through her parlour window heard the corncrake noise of steel on a grindstone, and then the sharp snip-snip of the shears. Hurrying out of the house, she was gratified to find that the seed she'd sown in Mr. Toombes' mind had germinated already. In his

waistcoat and shirtsleeves, three steps up a step-ladder, an old straw hat rather jaunty on the back of his head, he was chopping off the long bits that sprouted from the hinder part of the beaky crow or whatever it was that had grown out of the box-bush.

"Dunno that I'm much of a hand at peacocks," said Mr. Toombes, very red in the face from his exertions but more cheerful than Miss Protheroe had ever seen him before—funeral furnishing already perhaps half-forgotten. "But I thought I'd make a start on the cockyolly bird's backside."

Miss Protheroe, hurrying back into the cottage where she always took refuge when rough raw life threatened to intrude upon her, could hardly believe her ears. Had Mr. Toombes, so grave, so funereal, really used to her that rather coarse expression? There was a rude joviality about "cockyolly bird's backside" that was quite out of keeping with everything she had known or supposed about Mr. Toombes. Perhaps his whole character was changing in his retirement; perhaps his grave respectability had never been more than skin-deep, put on like his frock-coat and top hat for the benefit of the forever respectable dead. How alarming if that should prove to be true! *Men*, Miss Protheroe whispered to herself darkly, *you could never be sure about Men.*

You cannot, complained Mr. Toombes, go to evening classes in topiary; you've got to do it by the light of nature. Always it's a matter of trial and error; the Artist in you is your only guide.

This was the first time he had ever hinted to Miss Protheroe that he had an Artist in him, and it only increased her apprehensions for she had heard nothing good about Artists, and much that was bad. Day after day, *snip*, *snip*, *snip*, Mr. Toombes practised on his peacock. He took this strange hobby as severely as someone who takes measles late in life. It was like a fever with him. Sweat poured off him during the summer days: *snip*, *snip* up on the step-ladder in shirt-sleeves and straw hat, from after breakfast until opening-time.

That was another alarming thing. Mr. Toombes never used to touch a drop, Miss Protheroe had always understood. Now he went twice a day to the Horse and Harrow, a thing he would never have dreamt of doing when he had the dead to consider. But for the rest of his new-found leisure-time, he busied himself with the shears. He finished his peacock—Opus One the Rector jokingly called it—and it looked less like a live peacock than one that had been stuffed by a bad taxidermist. Nevertheless you ould see the *idea*, as the Rector charitably said.

Autumn came; and the leaves fell everywhere save in Mr. Toombes' evergreen garden where you could hardly tell summer from winter unless there was a sprinkle of snow. His topiary improved by leaps and bounds: the Artist coming out in him, as he himself put it. When Miss Protheroe complained about the owl that had kept her awake all night with premonitions of dying, Mr. Toombes said cheerfully, "Owl in the yew? I'll do you an owl—"

And goodness, in almost no time it seemed, the yew tree had become an owl tree. It took the shape of that old bird that hooted horribly to the moon, most sinister and brooding and hunched against the first light snow. The real owl still hooted in Mr. Toombes' garden; Miss Protheroe in her troubled dreams heard it, and wasn't quite sure whether it was live or in topiary.

She would catch sight of the owl-shape and it made her feel uncomfortable, it was an unneighbourly thing, gloomy and watchful, gazing over the boundary fence right into the upstairs window, which was bleared with steam when she had her bath. Once, as she was getting out of the bath, the real owl hooted triumphantly; scraggy and naked, she hurriedly wrapped herself in a towel.

It was just before Christmas, when that happened. Carol singers were coming round, and Mr. Toombes would ask them into his parlour and pour out big glasses of parsnip wine and slap the young girls on their bottoms; but they didn't complain because after all it was the festive season. However, there were plenty of gossips to talk about the Goings On after the next meeting of the W.I. And a voice in Miss Protheroe's mind whispered, *Men, Men, Men, you can never be sure about them, and they get more like that, not less, as they grow older!*

Sometimes in her nightmares the yew-tree owl took on the features of Mr. Toombes, and hooted at her incontinently.

Spring was in the air at last, and the girls and boys felt the stir of it and were up to goodness knew what in the bus shelter, from which Miss Protheroe had to avert her eyes as she passed. In April, the W.I. held its Annual Dance (*Husbands may be Brought*) to which somebody lacking a husband brought Mr. Toombes, who insisted on dancing with all the younger wives.

Miss Protheroe, whose thoughts were very refined even when they were top-secret whispers in her mind, paraphrased the things which the wives said at the W.I.: "*He's got to the Age, you know . . . It's something that happens to gentlemen at his time of life.*" But gentleman or no, it wasn't very nice to think of Mr. Toombes as a next-door neighbour.

Soon spring was everywhere. Ignoring the *No Hawkers* notice on her gate, it crept into Miss Protheroe's garden with its candytuft and mauve aubrietia and little dōlly blue scillas and pale primroses dying unmarried. Next door the usual *dishonesty* poked up its pink flowerheads through the clippings, the yew owl brooded darkly, a cockerel stood on top of a cypress so lively-looking you could almost imagine it crowed, and Mr. Toombes' Opus One, the attenuated peacock, was pruned and trimmed and reshaped altogether into a bird of the wildest fancy, a roc or a dodo or a phœnix bursting forth from the box-bush.

"It's the Artist coming out in me," said Mr. Toombes with pride, when people congratulated him on it. And now, as May brought out the naughty girls in their gay thin dresses, and the boys on their motorbikes—at this time of dismay for Miss Protheroe—who didn't like the spring because it was so disturbing—Mr. Toombes next door sharpened his shears and set to work upon what was clearly intended to be his masterpiece. He began—very cautious, very conservative, like a sculptor with a precious lump of marble brought all the way from Carrara—to trim the two yews which stood one on either side of his front door.

They were each about ten feet high; straight as soldiers but big-headed because of the Grecian Vases which once upon a time had surmounted them. These, of course, had grown out of shape altogether; and among the tangled twigs which composed them flocks of house-sparrows nested. These came chirping forth alarmedly at the first *clip-clip* of Mr. Toombes' shears.

For two or three days Mr. Toombes seemed content to whittle away the outgrowing shoots without imparting any particular shape to the yew trees; indeed the Rector, jocular as ever, called out, "What have you got there—Epstein's *Genesis*?" Mr. Toombes took no notice. He went on clipping with immense concentration and did not address a word to Miss Protheroe though she was weeding her flowerbed within thirty yards of him. At noon, as usual, he went up to the Horse and Harrow, from which he didn't return until half past two.

Immediately he mounted the step-ladder and stood there, his vertigo quite forgotten, clipping furiously throughout the sunny afternoon. Miss Protheroe, as she knelt upon her lawn using an old dinner-fork to prise out some intrusive plantains, heard him talking to himself rather incoherently as he worked. *The beer wagging his tongue*, whispered her secret voice darkly. Not much of it made sense (though she heard with awe the names of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci) but one remark came to

her clearly in a silence that fell between the blackbirds' singing. It was one which she would remember later on.

"You got to be very careful in this lark," Mr. Toombes admonished himself. "It's not as if you was a boy playing with plasticine. Snip a bit off, you can't never stick it on again. Easy does it, Mr. Leonardo."

Miss Protheroe retired into her cool cottage for tea, and nibbling a slice of her homemade seed-cake wondered about Mr. Toombes, and heartily wished she'd never set him off on his extraordinary hobby. But who would have thought that a man would become possessed by topiary; would let topiary turn his brain? On an impulse she took down the *Encyclopædia of Gardening* and under T, read the entry:

> TOPIARY: It is an old practice which has enjoyed a revival in recent years, but is not to be recommended for general use.

She couldn't have agreed more; especially when she ventured out in the cool of the evening—Mr. Toombes had gone off to the pub. She stared across her garden fence at the two yew trees, etched black in a sunset-shaft, standing tall above the heaps of clippings and feathery sparrows' nests and broken egg shells.

Seeing them in profile, it suddenly dawned upon Miss Protheroe that the amorphous lumps of yew tree were well on their way to becoming people. Two people. And already you could discern that the rough-hewn shapes were not identical. There was apparent in the upper half of the nearest figure a—Miss Protheroe scarcely dared define it to herself—a swelling. Or rather, two swellings. The figures, Miss Protheroe now realised, were to be of different sexes. A man and a woman were going to stand side by side at Mr. Toombes' front door.

This happened on a Friday. Next morning, Mr. Toombes was at it early. She heard his shears going almost as soon as the birds started singing. When she went out after breakfast, and emptied the cat-box as she always did, Mr. Toombes said an awful thing to her over the dividing fence—at least it seemed truly awful to Miss Protheroe—"It makes you feel like God," he said, "making creatures out of nowt."

Miss Protheroe didn't think it right that Mr. Toombes should liken himself to God: and, squinting sideways, she was horrified to see the double tumescence now plainly manifesting itself upon the upper half of the nearest yew. She retreated into her cottage, and stayed there until Mr. Toombes took himself off to the pub. Then she ventured out, and squinted narrowly at the two figures.

There was no doubt about it now: they had heads, shoulders, a suggestion of arms hanging at their sides. She stole out into the lane to have a peep at them from the front; but at that moment Mr. Toombes came back unexpectedly. The frenzy of creation must have dragged him early out of the pub. He tore up the steps, cast off his jacket, and took up the shears again. Feeling she ought to say something, since he had caught her peering at the figures, Miss Protheroe dared to remark, "In topiary, the . . . er . . . skirts and trousers, or perhaps I should say the draperies, are going to be rather difficult, aren't they?"

With terrible geniality Mr. Toombes leered at her over his shoulder. "There won't be skirts and trousers; nor no draperies neither. These 'ere are Adam and Eve."

All the afternoon, as she stirred the rhubarb jam flavoured with ginger which she always made at this time of year, Miss Protheroe listened to him clipping. Towards evening, she went upstairs and peeped out of a bedroom window and saw that he had finished the woman and was at work upon the man. It was the man that worried her most. She couldn't see what Mr. Toombes was doing exactly; but she thought he must be putting the finishing touches, for he walked round and round the tree snipping very delicately here and there.

She pulled her curtain and went to bed, but she couldn't sleep a wink as she tried to imagine and tried not to imagine Adam and Eve standing on either side of Mr. Toombes' garden path next door. Now and then she heard the owl hoot derisively. It was some time in the small hours when she remembered that sinister remark of Mr. Toombes', "Snip a bit off, you can't never stick it on again." It was then or thereabouts that she formed her terrible resolve.

Johnny Williams, the milkman, was the only person—other than Miss Protheroe and, of course, its creator—who ever set eyes upon Mr. Toombes' Adam in its original, unbowdlerised state. At about half past seven he went up Mr. Toombes' garden path to leave his milk bottle on the doorstep as usual, and you could have knocked him down with a feather.

There was Mr. Toombes snoring peacefully within the house, sleeping off the beer he'd had last night; and there was the broom propped against the door where he'd been sweeping up the last of the clippings; and there was this Adam—well, who would ever have thought it?

"No, I'm not a-telling you," said Johnny to Mrs. Hanson, the next customer he called on, who happened to be up and

making a cup of tea. "Seeing's believing," he said. "Just you go along and have a look!"

So Mrs. Hanson went along; but she had to change her bedroom slippers for walking shoes, and put on a warm coat against the dewy chill of the morning; otherwise she might have caught Miss Protheroe in the act. As it was, she met her in the lane, scurrying back to her cottage as if the devil were at her heels. She was white as a ghost and trembling, said Mrs. Hanson; and she was carrying a pair of shears.

As for Mr. Toombes' Adam—well, there was nothing special about it at all. Nothing like what Johnny hinted he had seen. Only a little tuft of twigs lying underneath it, on the path which Mr. Toombes had swept clean last evening.

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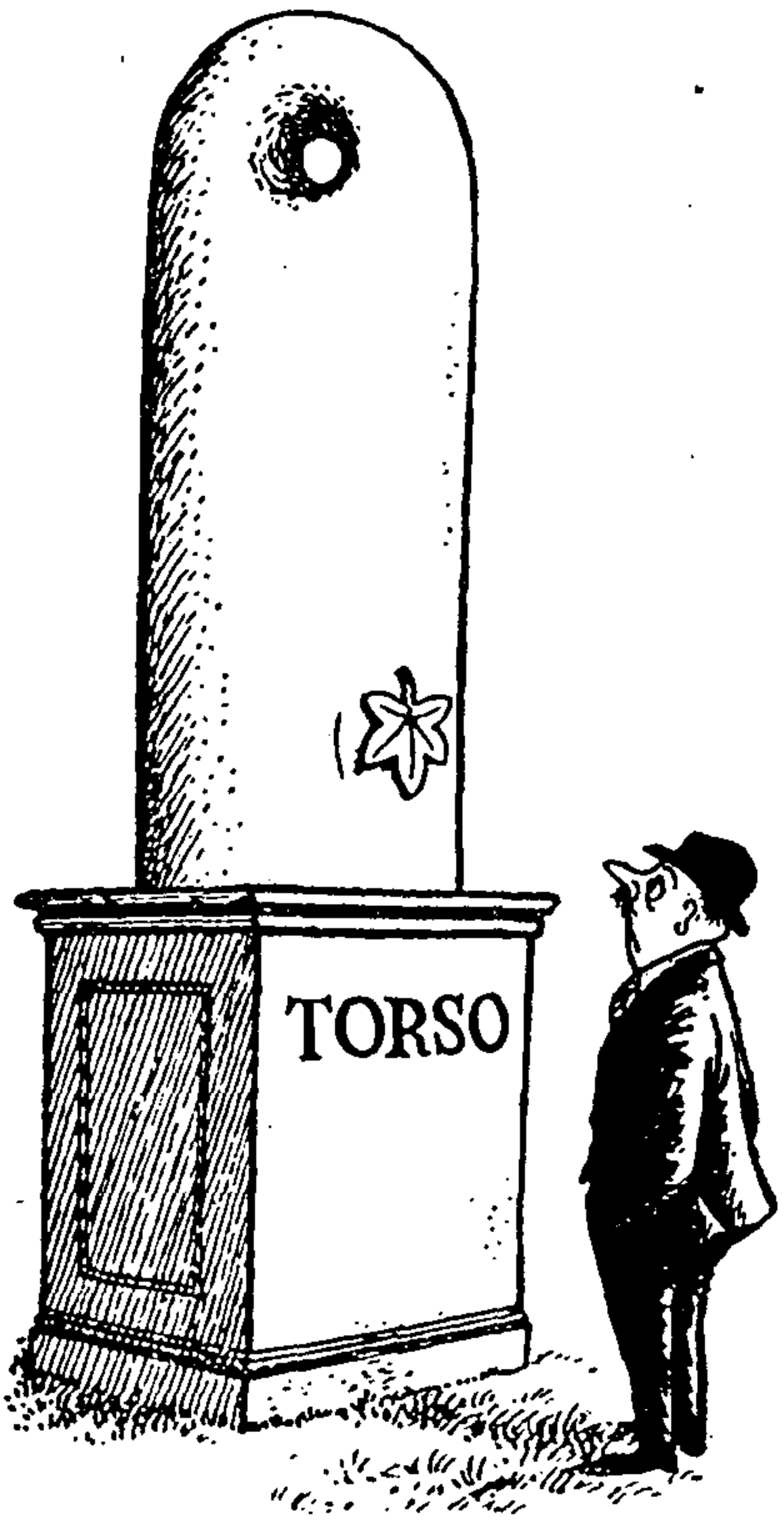

DESERT '64

BY GERALD SPARROW

I AM not an adventurous type. It is true that during recent years I have air-travelled 150,000 miles, but this was because at the time I was a lawyer carrying on a large international divorce practice—and people get into matrimonial difficulties in the most unlikely places: for instance, in Buddhist countries where there is only technical monogamy, or in Moslem countries where there is lawful polygamy. Most of my clients were Americans or British and this drove me backwards and forwards between Bangkok, Hong Kong, Tokyo, New York, and London . . .

But, basically, it is the Brighton Belle for me these days. Nevertheless old habits die hard. In February this year, I found myself, with Chaluey, my wife, in the warm, enchanting seaport of Tripoli in Libya, with its great palm-fringed corniche and its polyglot population speaking Arabic and Italian but very little English. The Libyan Government, suddenly oil-rich, was turning its attention to Tourism, a source of revenue that is less complicated politically, less foreign-dominated. The tourist comes, he pays, he goes . . . They had invited me to write a tourist booklet. I conjured up the phrase: LIBYA, THE NEW FRONTIER IN TOURISM. I wrote my booklet (illustrated) in ten days.

Chaluey and I were about to leave—my job completed—when, by chance, we dined with a Mr. Browne, an old resident, a bachelor, very British, humorous, a giant of a man, who owned five hundred acres of orange trees. We could see them in front of his green and white bungalow. It was harvest-time and each tree had a neat stack of yellow fruit at its base, and the workmen were arriving with crates to pack the fruit for export.

"Leaving tomorrow? Have you seen it all?"

"Well, yes. We've seen all the tourist highlights: Tripoli, Benghazi, and the old Roman and Greek cities—Sabrata, Leptis Magna, and Cyrene . . ."

"Have you been to Ghadames?"

"No. Where is that?"

"Let's go into the next room, my study. I'll show you."

There was a large-scale map on the wall. We followed our host's finger as he indicated routes.

"Here we are—Tripoli, civilisation. You know it. Fine hotels. Local wine at half a crown a bottle. Night-clubs. The Mecca of the oilmen from Cyrenaica. And this is where you should go! Ghadames. The finest oasis in Africa. It's on the Tunisian border. A place out of the history books. Nothing, and I mean nothing, has changed there for two thousand years . . ."

"But it must be eight hundred kilometres from here?"

"Yes, just over . . ."

"We'd love to, of course—but we have planned to go to Cairo tomorrow."

"Another week will make no difference."

"How could we get there? By plane?"

Mr. Browne smiled. "No planes. The tribesmen don't like them. You go by jeep. Land-Rover, with sand gears. I'll lend

you mine, and Ali my driver. He knows the ropes. You see, for the last three hundred kilometres there is no road, but as you are travelling south the sun will rise on your left and set on your right except for the last fifty miles when you will be going due west into the morning sun, with the setting sun behind you."

I turned to Chaluey for help in vain. She said, "I think we should go. Has anyone been lately?"

Dennis Browne replied, "No foreigners. You'll never forget it if you go. What do you say?"

"We'll go. What shall we need?"

"Water, tinned food, a rifle, a revolver, a compass, a map, and lots of benzine. Ali will have all these ready in the morning. He'll call at your hotel, say five o'clock? Better to start before the sun gets up. And, oh yes, I'll give Ali some blankets. It can be cold in the desert at night . . ."

We thanked him. His offer was generous to a fault. He was that kind of man. We told the hotel to call us at four. We ate a café-complet, croissants and coffee, gathered our coats and a suitcase, and went into the lounge to wait for Ali.

I expected him to come about five-thirty. The Libyan world is often a little late. Time is not valued as it is in the west. But at two minutes to five, we saw the Land-Rover coming down the drive. Ali, a cheerful, lean, lithe man, who wore the loose white Libyan toga and the Libyan version of the fez—a soft red cloth cap, round and fitting—jumped out from the driver's seat, loaded our luggage, and in a few moments we were off . . . driving through a sleeping Tripoli, the street lamps still competing with the dawn and giving the streets and buildings a mystical quality they did not have by day.

Ali spoke English. One felt that it would have been impossible for him to converse with Dennis Browne in any other language.

"Mr. Browne says we should be in Ghadames the day after tomorrow?"

Ali looked round and for a moment his smile vanished. "Insha Allah," he said: God being willing.

With my western passion for a schedule I was trying to bring the time factor into the desert, but I had learnt my first lesson. If God was willing, we should reach Ghadames in forty-eight hours. If He was not willing . . .? Chaluey had round her neck on a gold chain, her little cluster of jade and gold Buddhas. Suddenly I realised: here we were, the three of us, the Moslem, the Buddhist, and the Christian. We swung out of the suburbs of Tripoli and took the desert road south and west to Jefren.

We were on our way . . .

We left Tripoli behind us, its minarets pointing like rugged fingers to heaven. As we moved silently through the suburbs, the first calls to prayer were echoing through the streets amplified by the Mosque loudspeakers. We are nothing if not modern in Tripoli. Then within minutes, we were clear of the city and all it stood for. The road was running through orange groves and fields of eucalyptus and a variety of citrus fruits.

An hour of this and the scene changed again. We started to climb into the Jebel. The hills were barren, stark, and the superbly built Italian road wound right and left to achieve a possible gradient forming hairpin bends at each turning. We reached the summit and the air blew fresh and cold. The lilies and languors of Tripoli were far behind us. We drove on at a steady eighty kilometres an hour, and arrived at the little town of Jefren.

"Hotel, here," said Ali. And there was, of a kind. They gave us French coffee and Arab sweetmeats. Rested, we were on our way again. Our next port of call was Nalut, a small fortified Arab town. We lunched there. A Berber served us. We were entering Berber country. This man was upstanding, direct, proud. We asked him what there was to eat and he smiled and said, "Sorry, only macaroni and cow."

Chaluey said, "What kind of cow?"

The Berber said, "Old cow."

"Then we will have macaroni and old cow." We washed it down with a bottle of the local vin rouge. The cow was old, indeed, but the wine was as young as yesterday.

I said to Chaluey, "Very civilised so far. Arab villages, small hotels, old cows, roads . . ."

"I have a feeling we are about to pass into another world. This is almost the end of the road. And the end of the road means the beginning of the desert."

"Perhaps you're right. Where's Ali?"

She pointed to the small compound that surrounded the hotel. "There on his prayer mat. Look, he is facing east to Mecca."

I watched the kneeling figure. Apparently he had said his prayer, for he touched the ground three times with his forehead, rose swiftly to his feet, methodically folded his rug by rolling it, and carrying it under his left arm, returned to wait for us in the jeep.

"Has he eaten?"

"No, it is Ramadan. He does not eat till sunset."

"Let's go, then."

Chaluey was right. In another fifty kilometres the road did

end. Its place was taken by desert tracks, but often there appeared to be three or four of these. Then Ali would get out and examine them minutely. After doing so, he took the one of his choice. He never seemed in doubt. To us, they looked identical.

Another hundred kilometres past Sinauen and the tracks vanished. We were travelling over the desert by compass, by sun, and by experience.

"Are we all right, Ali?"

"All right so far, sir. When you like to sleep?"

"When the sun goes down?"

"Good. It is the right way."

We halted by a dune that gave some shelter from the evening wind. We ate very well, for these were our own provisions. We drank our wine. The sun went down—a great red orb—into the golden horizon. Quickly the dusk came. Then the darkness. The moon, that was waxing, came up. We tucked the blankets round us. It was incredibly lovely, fresh, clean, virgin . . .

Chaluey spoke, "You see what has happened?"

"What?"

"The desert has taken over. Whoever heard of going to bed at seven-thirty? We'll be up at dawn or just before. We travel in the light, sleep in the dark. It's the old way."

As she said this, I had that strange sensation that I had had once before in the teak forests of Northern Laos, of having passed out of one kind of life into another kind. This was the land of the sun and the sand. It belonged to the desert foxes, the desert hawks—and to the Bedouin nomads. We were no longer in the twentieth century. We were right back at the beginning. With this piece of philosophical contemplation, I slid into a dreamless sleep.

It got uncommonly cold in the night and I made my way to the jeep. Ali was sleeping on his gun. He stirred.

"Only some more blankets." He gave them to me. I put two around Chaluey and tucked the third and last one round myself.

It was still dark when we woke, and yet not quite dark. There was the faintest stir in the desert as if the feet of the wind were hurrying to call the dawn. Ali was already up, preparing "breakfast."

We ate and drank our hot coffee and were on our way. We were travelling almost due south now. I remembered Browne's words: "The rising sun on your left. The sinking sun on your right." And then without warning, ahead of us, between us and

the sun, there was a village and a sheet of water, glistening, fringed with three palm trees.

I said to Ali, "What is it? It's not on the map." He looked. And then he looked again.

"Mirage, sir."

Before he said this, the village had looked substantial, a medley of dun-coloured houses with a mosque. After his verdict I looked again—and the village dissolved before our eyes, but the sheet of water was still there. No oasis was on our map. Ali said, "No water. Illusion."

"And the palm trees?"

"Not there, sir."

I got out my camera and took two shots of the water and the palm trees that were not there. When we got back to Tripoli we had the roll developed. The water and the trees that did not exist were there, clear, bright, gleaming in the photograph. So the camera can be deceived by the mirage. I had not realised this was possible. We were indeed entering another world, a world in which many things were not what they seemed to be.

We slept again in the open that night. Next day we drove west. We were on our last fifty miles to Ghadames. We reached the oasis and Arab town before noon.

Surprisingly there was a clean little inn here, the Ain El Fras, the "Mare's Spring," a reference to the legend that in the seventh century Ocba Ben Nafa, the Arab chief, had called here desperately needing water for his men: his mare, pawing the sand, had struck a great gush of pure spring water.

We walked through the little town. The streets were fantastic. Many of them went slap through the houses of the inhabitants. Chaluey said, "Privacy? It is not treasured here."

Ghadames was peaceful, proud, quiet, serene. Ali said, "You wish to go to Tunin?"

"How far?"

"Not far. You can see the Touareg, the ruling tribe. Foreigners do not see them. They are men apart."

We went on again across the desert and reached the oasis of the Touareg. Then something happened which was totally unexpected. Our Land-Rover was surrounded by men on dromedaries—mehari, the Touareg camel, that can sail over the desert at thirty miles an hour, a fantastic speed. The men wore long baggy trousers, mainly of blue, and loose white coats. They all carried rifles.

Ali said, "I think they would like us to explain. Why are we here?"

I got out with Ali, and we spoke to the man who seemed to be their leader. He was mounted on a splendid Arab and was quite young.

I said to Ali, " Please tell him we are visitors. We return to Ghadames today."

Ali spoke in Arabic. The man shook his head.

" What does he say? " I asked.

" He says you cannot return tonight."

" But why not? That is what we plan to do."

Ali spoke to the chief again.

" He says you are in their country. You must stay the night as their guests. It is the custom. I should agree, sir."

I spoke to Chaluey, then to Ali. " Thank him. We shall be his guests for one night."

The man smiled and signalled to his followers. Wheeling into a semi-circle, they made a sign for the jeep to move with them.

Chaluey whispered, " Are we their prisoners? "

" I don't know. We are in their hands."

They took us out to their encampment, a group of over forty tents. I remembered signing the " desert book " in Tripoli, the book that desert travellers signed just in case . . . If they did not return within a week of the stated time, a party would come and search. Would that do much good? Was I being too apprehensive? The next few hours would show.

The position of not knowing whether one is a prisoner being held perhaps to ransom or a genuine guest, is not uncommon in the East and Near East. Even Prime Ministers are at times in doubt as to whether the Palace Guards are there to protect them or to keep them in custody. The western addiction to clear-cut situations—to black or white—holds no sway here. Black merges gradually by way of grey into white. We would not know our true status until tomorrow when the chips would be down.

Meanwhile the leader of the Touareg, who gave his name as Rashid, treated us as captive guests. I think the ambiguity of the situation amused him. We ate with him and his minor sheiks that night, tearing the lamb to pieces with our hands which afterwards we washed in rosewater. None of the Touareg spoke English. Ali was our interpreter.

To entertain us—we hoped—the men started dancing after the coffee-grinder had gone his rounds. The coffee was stronger than Turkish coffee. Bitter in the Bedouin manner.

They lighted fires and each man danced alone or in a group, but without unity. They danced as men must have danced before Christ was born, freely to express their happiness, their

sadness, their lust . . . They sang their songs which had endless repetitive words and half tones and seemed uniformly sad and forlorn.

Then it was time to sleep. Ali said, " The tents of the women are there."

I said to Chaluey, " Are you going? "

But she replied, " Absolutely not. I stay with you."

And so it was. We slept in a tent that night, and when I woke up I undid the flap and looked out. We were surrounded by half a dozen men, leaning on their rifles. The Touareg were taking no chances. Then, for the first time, I was afraid. The desert night seemed sinister, oppressive. These men, I felt certain, would demand a ransom for our return. They had that reputation in Tripoli.

And those persuasive little reminders that kidnappers are apt to send to the authorities or to the family of the captive . . . a hair at first, or a lock of hair, a finger-nail, and then, more directly, a finger, an ear . . .

Being a prisoner of the Japanese during the war had left me with a sickening horror of physical violence. I knew that I could not face any kind of torture, and to think of Chaluey being subjected to any indignity terrified me.

In the morning I opened the flaps of our tent, and the sun swam into the darkness of the interior suddenly filling it with light. I looked out, and there, approaching, was Rashid followed by four armed men. I watched him, fascinated, filled with the acutest apprehension. He walked slowly, throwing a word back to his men. They seemed at that moment to resemble an execution squad. I remembered seeing the head of a criminal severed with a sword in Siam so that it leapt in a gush of blood from the victim's shoulders.

Rashid was near now. He looked up and saw me, and for a moment did not speak.

I could not speak to him for no words came.

Then to my astonishment and utter relief, he was smiling, and said in English, " Today you return. We will see you on your way. I hope you will never forget my people? "

I thanked him, concealing my fear, and added, " You did not tell us you spoke English . . ."

" It is not necessary to tell all at first meeting."

They rode out with us for thirty miles, galloping ahead, their horses throwing up the sand in small dust clouds. They sang as they rode, the free men, lords of their own life.

And then they wheeled round to return. It was Rashid who had the last word: "Never be afraid in the desert," he said. "It is in the towns that the evil lurks. God be with you!"

Two days later we were back in "civilisation." But, on the Brighton Belle, I still remember Rashid, who knew that men were the masters of time, and the servants of God.

Chaluey said, "Do you realise we never saw their women?"

It was true. But we had seen the mirage, and had passed through the curtain that, to this day, divides the serf of the city from the free man of the desert.

It was an unforgettable experience.

© Gerald Sparrow 1964

Augustus and his faithful hound

"He won't trouble you any more . . . I tied him to a tree."

Her face was without warmth—her eyes sad

ENIGMA

BY DARRELL BATES

"WHAT sort of man was he?" I asked.

He was just an outline under the sheet. They had turned the sheet back for me to see his face, but it didn't tell me anything. Age might have etched the deep lines on either side of the nose and mouth, or disappointment, or dissipation perhaps. I couldn't tell.

"He was—" they spread their hands flat, face downwards, the chocolate-coloured fingers open—"a foreigner."

For them perhaps this was enough. He was a foreigner; it explained everything. When they saw that for me, another foreigner, this explanation wasn't enough, they tried again.

"He was a painter, he had a beard. He lived alone here at the inn in the cheapest room. He drank much. He made much noise when he was drunk, much noise and much trouble. And he—"

One of the older men said, "Psst! Have some respect," he said; "the man after all is dead."

"What else?" I asked. They had called me from the nearest island; I was entitled to ask some more questions. A foreigner had died, they wanted another foreigner to see the body in case there was any trouble afterwards.

The younger man hesitated still. He cleared his throat, he looked at the older man who had checked him.

"Formerly, before he was ill, he would go about the island. He offered money to women who pleased him to take off their clothes, and young girls, boys even."

"I expect he wanted to paint them," I said.

"So he said." It was clear that none of the men in the room believed it.

"Did he leave any papers," I asked, "or anything?"

"No," they said, "there is nothing. Only this. We found it in a drawer under some clothes. Everything else he burnt, his pictures, his bills, some books." They pointed to a heap of ashes on the bare stone floor.

They handed the photograph to me. "His sister, no doubt," the young man said. "What else could a woman with a face like that be?"

"Perhaps," I said, when I too had looked at the face in the photograph, "perhaps there was some good in him after all."

"Or perhaps," said the old man, looking at the photograph again, "there was after all some bad in her."

He turned his head and spat into the ashes on the floor. "Who can say?"

His name we discovered through the inter-island wireless was Cullen. John Cullen. He was fifty-one; he came from Denver; the American Consulate on the main island knew all about him. He was a rolling stone and he owed money everywhere. They buried him the next day—corpses didn't last long in the tropical island heat. I was the only mourner. I didn't tell the Consul about the photograph; I felt that the least I could do to make up for my deception was to go to the funeral.

It was six weeks before I finished the book I was working on.

I had gone back to my island, the next door one, a dozen miles away, after they had buried him. I stayed there until the book was done. I didn't like it much, I was glad when I had finished it. I worked in the mornings; in the afternoon I swam or fished or slept; and in the evenings I drank cheap wine and talked with Georges. Just as I had done before. The only thing that was different was that now I had the photograph.

I liked looking at it best in the evening. When I was sober, in the morning, the face was too severe, too set in virtue, the hair drawn back from the wide forehead harshly like a punishment. But in the evenings, the wine-filled evenings, I saw sadness in those deep-set eyes. Sometimes, if I stayed up long and late, I even thought I saw a hidden compassion in the mouth, as if that taut, unsmiling line had been drawn not by nature but by an effort of will.

"What sort of woman would you say she was?" I asked.

Georges was the owner of the bar. In the winter visitors came, but in the summer the place was empty. Most of Georges' ancestry was French, a little came from somewhere else, a brown-skinned creole girl perhaps. Georges was an expert on women.

"A priest's housekeeper, or some child's unmarried aunt." He picked up the photograph and looked at it again. "She's

virtuous though, not by neglect or accident, but by conviction." He put the photograph on the tabletop. " Her neck is good, it carries the head well."

They couldn't tell me much about him on the main island. " He just wasn't any good," the Consul said. He was a pale-faced man, he wore a neat bow tie, his wife played the organ every Sunday. " He hadn't got any friends here. The ones he had, he borrowed money from them and didn't pay, or else he insulted them when he had had too much to drink."

" What about women ? " I asked. " Did he have a girl or anything? "

" No," said the Consul, " I don't think so. No decent woman anyway. Of that, you can be sure."

" Oh," I said. " When did he first come here, to the islands? "

" Oh, years ago. I don't know when he came." He wasn't interested, he had other things to do. I only had one more question.

" What were his paintings like? "

The man shrugged. " Not my line," he said. " They don't make sense to me at all. There are some at Albert's if you want to see them. He left them there in part payment of his liquor bill or something." Albert's was a general store on the quayside . . .

" Yes," said the man there. He had Chinese blood in him and a great capacity for credit. " I've got a few. Would you like to see them? "

They were strange things all right, painted on pieces of board. They weren't very pretty either. Trees mostly that somehow looked like women, and women that somehow looked like trees.

" Do you want to buy one? " he asked hopefully. He had obviously asked the question several times before.

I shook my head. I hadn't got the space, I said, and hadn't got the money.

He smiled. " That's what they all say." He turned the pictures back again to face the store-room wall.

I had a week before the boat came. I showed the photograph in bars, and in the post office, even to strange elderly ladies whom I met in the street, but no one knew the face. One day, though it seemed unlikely, I tried the police. No, they said, we don't know her. The Sergeant looked at the face, at the high, lace-lined collar on the neck, and the tightly-drawn-back hair. " Why don't you try the Mission? " he said.

The first person I saw at the Mission was a round redfaced female in a sun helmet. " No," she said at once. " We don't

know her." She spoke too quickly, she slid her eyes away too fast. My heart missed a beat or two like when you're hunting something in long grass and you hear a rustle.

"Could you ask someone?" I said. "You haven't been here long, have you? You're too young." I leered at her a little as encouragement.

"Well—" she started. In the end she asked me to wait.

She came back with a tall thin man with pale blue eyes. He looked at me with distaste for a moment or two. Then he put the photograph on the table.

"She was here," he said in an obituary voice, "but she left."

"Can you tell me her name," I asked, "or anything?"

"Her name was Waters." It was clear that as far as he was concerned, or cared, she was dead. "I don't know anything more. Good day."

"When did she leave?" He was already moving away.

"Five or six years ago, as far as I remember."

"Can you tell me—" I had to be quick, he had nearly reached the doorway—"what she did?"

He turned, and for the first time there was a look of satisfaction in his face. "Yes, I can. She was up at the leper camp." He made it sound as if she had been unclean herself.

In the end I found what I wanted in the shipping office. A Miss Waters had left the island in July 1957. They even had a note of her address because of the luggage. One leather trunk. It looked as if she had left in a hurry, because even that went on a different boat.

It was a grey, east-windy day when we went up the estuary of the Thames. The seagulls swooped for bread, the barges looked so beautiful they almost made me cry. I had lived on Canvey Island as a boy. I took the photograph out of my wallet and looked at it. I wondered where she had lived as a girl, and what adversities or disciplines had carved that pale, warmthless face, and those sad eyes. I wondered what six years had done to it, and whether it was still alive.

The address I had was in Salisbury.

"Yes," they said, "they used to live here, but they left when Mrs. Waters died. They went to—now where was it, dear?" the woman said to another. "Somewhere near Wincanton, wasn't it?"

"Did the daughter go there, too?" I asked. "The one who had been abroad?"

"Oh, that one," they said. "Yes, she went, too; she was a

strange one to be sure. Yes, Wincanton it was, I remember now. She had a job there in a school, or something . . . "

It wasn't Wincanton, as a matter of fact, but it was a village a dozen or so miles away. A very quiet village, between the A 30 and the A 303 that looked somehow as if it had been left behind, like a pocket of still, stagnant water in a stream.

"Miss Waters," the people knew her as; no one seemed to know her other name. There had been another sister, Mary, but she had gone away to London or somewhere where there was a bit more life. There was only Miss Waters now, and her father, of course. No, they said, we don't see much of them. They keep themselves to themselves, she's a good teacher though; they say the children like her . . .

"Yes?" He was a very old man, with dry paper-like skin and bent, twisted hands.

I asked if Miss Waters was in.

"No," he said, "she's still up at the school. She often works late, or perhaps she's gone for a walk. I don't really know." He didn't ask me in. It was a very small cottage, there only seemed to be two rooms.

"Thank you," I said.

There was no one at the school. It was getting dark now. There were no lights on anywhere. I walked back to the cottage and waited on the other side of the road.

"Excuse me," I said, "but are you Miss Waters?"

Somehow I knew it was she long before I could see her face. There was something about the way she walked that fitted the face. "Her neck," I remembered Georges saying, "carries the head well."

"Yes," she said. She had a rather deep voice, there was no touch of interest or of curiosity in it.

"I'm . . ." I hesitated. I had rehearsed what I would say, but now I couldn't remember it. "I was in The Islands." They had a name, but everyone who had been there just called them The Islands.

She had aged a little, of course, but her face was much the same, the hair was drawn back harshly from her brow. It was too dark for me to see what was in her eyes.

"I'm not interested in The Islands," she said. She started to walk away.

"Please," I said. She didn't stop, she didn't even hesitate. She opened the gate on the other side of the road. "Miss Waters," I tried again. She opened the door of the cottage and shut it behind her . . .

"Why are you pestering me?" I had waited until the afternoon of the following day. She had left the school at half past four and walked down a lane that went away from the village, up towards a hill. She didn't look scared or anxious, or even annoyed. She just looked nothing. She looked at me as if I were a windowpane, as if there was something else more interesting beyond.

"I'm sorry," I said, "I really am. I know it seems odd, but—" I took out my wallet and showed her the photograph.

In the end she took it. She turned it over and looked at the back. Then she gave it to me again.

"I finished with The Islands," she said, "a long time ago."

"Yes, I know." It was a silly thing to say, I didn't mean anything by it.

"How do you know? How can you possibly know?"

She was about thirty-two, I guessed, or perhaps a little more. She wasn't pretty. I knew that, of course: her face was too severe, the mouth too set, but she carried herself well, her arms were beautiful, and her hands.

"No," I said, "I don't know. I couldn't possibly know. It was just—well, they told me you had left."

"Who told you?"

"The Mission. The Mission told me."

"Did they tell you anything else?"

"No," I said. "No," I lied. "I didn't ask them. It was no business of mine." She didn't say anything, she was looking at my awkward hands. "Was it?" I added.

"No," she said. "Not of yours, or of anyone's. It was a long time ago . . ."

"I didn't mean," I said, "to pry."

"No. I know." She hadn't smiled, and yet her mouth had moved. Yes, it had moved a little, beyond what was needed for the bare essential of the vowels and the consonants, and there was gentleness there I saw and compassion, after all.

"Where did you get the photograph?" she asked.

"It was among his things." I didn't use his name, I thought it was better not to. "I expect you heard that he had died."

She knew who I was talking about, she made no pretence about it. "No," she said, "I hadn't heard."

We had been walking and had reached the top of the hill. The countryside was soft in the evening mist, the colours muted and blending, the greens and the browns and the greys.

"What did he die of?" she asked. Her voice was flat and neutral. "Drink?"

"I don't think so," I said. "He just died. He was ill. He . . ."

She gave me a long, rather searching look. "You're a kind person, aren't you?"

I didn't say anything. The way she had said it, it didn't sound like a compliment at all.

She turned on her heel, her face was set like a mask. "It's time I went." She started to walk away. I followed, but slowly, not trying to catch up with her.

"Are you staying near here?"

"Yes," I said. "In Wincanton." There wasn't anywhere to stay in the village. I had asked.

"How did you get here. Have you got a car?"

"No, I borrowed a bicycle."

She stopped for a moment and turned and looked at me again. Then she went on. "Would you like some tea?" She spoke over her shoulder, not looking at me, as if an invitation to tea was something to be ashamed of . . .

It was some time before I realised that her father was blind, or nearly blind.

"Would you do something for me?" she asked when we had finished tea. "I've got some washing to do. Would you read to him?"

I asked him what he would like. "The Sonnets," he said, "I'd like the Sonnets. They sound better read by a man. A woman's voice isn't right."

When I had finished I looked up and saw that she was listening in the doorway.

"Thank you," the old man said. "Will you be coming again?"

"No, Father." She went to him, her hand touched his shoulder. "He has to go away. I'm sorry, but he has to go away."

"No," I said. I was surprised at myself, it was unlike me to ignore so clear a dismissal. "I can change my plans. I'll come tomorrow if you like and read to you again."

"It's very kind of you," the old man said, "very kind."

"Yes," she echoed, "very kind." I expected her to be annoyed, but when I looked up I saw her eyes suddenly were wet with tears.

"Good night," I said, and went out of the door.

"Did you know him well?" she asked. I had waited the next evening at the top of the hill. I watched her walk up the path.

I liked watching her when she moved; it was only in repose that she looked puritanical and set.

"No. The first time I saw him was when they drew back the sheet."

"He was no good." There was no emotion in her voice, she might have been listing the parts of speech to a class of schoolchildren. "He was a drunkard and a cheat and a liar and a wastrel. He was . . ."

"There must have been some good in him."

"Why did you say that? Did someone tell you?"

"No," I said, "no one told me."

"Then how do you know?"

"Because," I said, "he had your photograph."

She didn't say anything for some time. Then she spoke in a different, quieter voice.

"I saw him one day playing with the leper children. He was taking them for rides on his back, and laughing with them, and telling them stories, touching them . . . He looked hungry and ill, I gave him some food. He stayed with me for nearly a month, until they found out and sent me away."

"So there was good in him," I said, "after all."

"No," she said, "there wasn't. I realised afterwards that he was only playing with the leper children because he was drunk." Her face was a mask again, one had to look hard to see the compassion underneath.

"Then why—" I asked—"why did you take him in?"

She got up. "It's time you went and read to my father. It was the reason you came back, wasn't it? Because you are a kind person." Again it didn't sound like a compliment, there was this time even a touch of contempt.

"Don't go," she said, "there's something I want to show you."

The old man was upstairs now in his room, listening to something on the wireless. I had read to him for over an hour. He hadn't wanted any more Shakespeare. He asked for *Pickwick Papers*. "That was nice," he said at the end of chapter four, "can you come again tomorrow?" I had the feeling that he was more perceptive than he looked, that he had more than a selfish reason for choosing a book that would take a week or more to read.

"I'm going to show you a picture," she said. "I've never shown it to anyone before. Not to anyone." She went out of the door and I heard her moving a box. She came back holding a piece of board; the back was towards me.

"Do you know why I'm showing it to you?"

"No," I said.

"You are beginning to—" she hesitated, love was a word she would always avoid—"to like me, aren't you?"

I didn't say anything.

"You think I'm good and kind, thoughtful and sober and virtuous, and that I only took John Cullen in out of pity and because I thought there was some goodness in him. Don't you?"

Still I said nothing; I couldn't think of anything to say.

"Don't you?"

"Yes," I said.

She turned the picture round then.

It was a small picture, but it said a great deal. There was a face, severe, untouched and untouchable, the head was in the clouds. The body was bare, and the feet were firmly rooted in the earthy soil like trees.

"Now," she said, "you know what I am like and why I took him in."

She snatched the picture from me. "Take your shattered illusions now, and go." She went to the door and opened it, and as I moved she shut it in my face.

As I walked down the path to the garden gate her father heard me and leaned out of the window.

"You'll come tomorrow, won't you," he said, "to read some more of *Pickwick*?"

I wasn't thinking of tomorrow, or of *Pickwick*. I was remembering what the old man had said that afternoon when I had seen John Cullen's corpse under the sheet, and the photograph that they had found in the drawer, and the face, that strangely compelling face that I had come so far to see.

"Won't you?" he asked again.

"Yes," I said. "Yes—I will."

It took me a week or more to finish *Pickwick*, and then I went on to *Oliver Twist* and *Dombey and Son* and now, all these weeks and months later, I am reading him *David Copperfield*.

They still call her Miss Waters in the village. I don't know why, but country people often take a long time to get used to change.

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SOLUTION TO TEN MINUTE CROSSWORD (PAGE 167)

ACROSS. 1, Monarch. 5, Army. 7, Tom. 8, Brighter. 9, Liner. 10, Eire. 13, Emma. 14, Iota. 18, Edge. 19, Corps. 21, Coverlet. 22, Ebb. 23, Herb. 24, Wrestle.

DOWN. 1, Metallic. 2, Nominate. 3, Robert. 4, Hailed. 5, Ashore. 6, Meek. 11, Emergent. 12, Passable. 15, Adverb. 16, Fellow. 17, Scythe. 20, Home.

TOURISTS' EYE—VIEW

The English are not an inventive people; they don't eat enough pie.

THOMAS A. EDISON

England Expects

Let us pause to consider the English,
Who when they pause to consider themselves they get all reticently thrilled and tinglish,
Because every Englishman is convinced of one thing, viz:
That to be an Englishman is to belong to the most exclusive club there is:
A club to which benighted bounders of Frenchmen and Germans and Italians et cetera cannot even aspire to belong,
Because they don't even speak English, and the Americans are worst of all because they speak it wrong . . .
All good Englishmen go to Oxford or Cambridge and they all write and publish books before their graduation,
And I often wondered how they did it until I realised that they have to do it because their genteel accents are so developed that they can no longer understand each other's spoken words so the written word is their only means of inter-communication.
England is the last home of the aristocracy, and the art of protecting the aristocracy from the encroachments of commerce has been raised to quite an art.
Because in America a rich butter-and-egg man is only a rich butter-and-egg man or at the most an honorary LL.D. of some hungry university, but in England he is Sir Benjamin Buttery, Bart.
Anyhow, I think the English people are sweet,
And we might as well get used to them because when they slip and fall they always land on their own or somebody else's feet.

OGDEN NASH

A Delicate Touch

Mar. 5, 1810: There are some customs here not quite consistent with that scrupulous delicacy on which the English pique themselves. Towards the end of dinner, and before the ladies retire, bowls of coloured glass full of water are placed before each person. All—women as well as men—stoop over it, sucking up some of the water, and returning it, often more than once, and, with a spitting and washing sort of noise, quite charming—the operation frequently assisted by a finger elegantly thrust into the mouth!

LOUIS SIMOND, *A Journal of a Tour in Great Britain*

Mad dogs and Englishmen
Go out in the midday sun.
The toughest Burmese bandit
Can never understand it.
In Rangoon the heat of noon
Is just what the natives shun.
They put their Scotch or Rye down—and
lie down.
In a jungle town where the sun beats down
To the rage of man and beast,
The English garb of the English Sahib
Merely gets a bit more creased.
In Bangkok at twelve o'clock

They foam at the mouth and run,
But mad dogs and Englishmen
Go out in the midday sun. NOEL COWARD

Taking French Leave

" These English femmes de monde, these Veronicas and Sheilas and Brendas . . . they are proud and distant, out when the telephone bell rings, not free to dine unless you ask them a week before—in short, elles cherchent à se faire valoir, and it never never succeeds. Even Englishmen, who are used to it, don't like it after a bit. Of course, no Frenchman would put up with it for a day. So they go on reshuffling . . ."

" Don't you think Polly is very beautiful? " I said.

" Yes, but she is also rather a riddle to me," he replied. " Perhaps she is not having a properly organised sex life. Yes, no doubt it is that which makes her so dreamy. I must see what I can do for her—only there's not much time." He looked at his watch.

I said primly that very few well brought up English girls of nineteen have a properly organised sex life. Mine was not organised at all, I knew, but I did not seem to be so specially dreamy . . . NANCY MITFORD, *Love in a Cold Climate*

All Shook Up

To take a man in this manner by the arm, and shake it till his shoulder is almost dislocated, is one of the grand testimonies of friendship, which the English give each other, when they happen to meet: this they do very coolly; there is no expression of friendship in their countenances, yet the whole soul enters the arm which gives the shake. This supplies the place of the embrace and salutes of the French.

PIERRE JEAN GROSLEY, *A Tour to London*, 1765

Viva Voce

When you hear it languishing
and hooing and cooing and sidling through the front teeth,
the oxford voice,
or worse still
the would-be oxford voice
you don't even laugh any more, you can't.
For every blooming bird is an Oxford cuckoo nowadays,
you can't sit on a bus or in the tube
but it breathes gently and languishingly in the back of your neck.
And oh, so seductively superior, so seductively
self effacingly
deprecatingly
superior—

We wouldn't insist on it for a moment
but we are
we are
you admit we are
superior.

D. H. LAWRENCE

Fair Cop

Nell and I liked the London cops or bobbies very much. They are a highly efficient body of men who wear chin straps and never allow a murderer to escape. Murder is rare in England and an unsolved murder is rarer. The low rate of homicide is due to the fact that the British never get well enough acquainted to kill each other. Once in a while a foreigner kills an Englishman for being too reticent, but if you see an Englishman murdering another Englishman you can be pretty sure the victim is either a blood relative or a friend of long standing.

FRANK SULLIVAN, *Sullivan at Bay*

What chance would anyone have . . .

HIGH GARRISON

BY LEN DEIGHTON

THE way I understood it we were going to be the first men ever to stay there. That's what they said when they selected us for the mission. Now they said that the others were here too, and that they were heading towards us. I looked around at the bleak barren metallic-looking landscape. I had never seen its like. I suppose few men had. I looked up through the clear air. The neighbouring stars were growing dim. I remembered how, as a child, I wanted so much to travel to them.

The bald officer was trying to light a fire and two young soldiers who had only joined us three days before the mission were helping him. These two youngsters had southern accents so broad that I could only just understand them. The bald officer couldn't understand them either, and he looked up at me and shrugged, but I pretended not to see him, I didn't want to be involved with them or with their fire lighting. Not that I wasn't interested in being warmer. I was, but as officer in command I preferred just to be an onlooker.

One of the young soldiers got to his feet and came over to me.

"The clothing, sir," he said in his strange twanging voice, "they get an army contract and as long as they have friends in the Senate they never lose it! We are the ones that suffer."

"I don't want you speaking that way," I said. I didn't want him to think that the moment he gets a special assignment he could sound off. I said, "Your commander recommended you, perhaps he made a mistake."

"Oh no, sir," the soldier said hastily. "It's just that where I come from in the South," he smiled sheepishly, knowing that his voice had already told me that fact. "It's so warm there," he finished, "even at this time of year. Even in October."

I looked into his face, he had cut himself shaving and a spider

London-born 35 years ago, Len Deighton has brought a new kind of realism and humour to the spy-thriller. His novels, The Ipcress File, Horse Under Water, and his latest, Funeral in Berlin, have produced an unnamed, laconic, anti-public school hero that even James Bond may well envy.

Deighton's jobs have been as diversified as his plots. He's been a pastry cook, railway plate-layer, manager of a gown factory, and a waiter in Piccadilly. As a novelist, he's a master at double-crossing us to make us re-think his characters. High Garrison is another Len Deighton explosive surprise package.

of dried blood crawled along his cheek. He would be a good soldier left to do a soldier's job down there but up here he felt out of place and they were the kind who felt fear first.

" It's the trip back, sir," he said, " and now the men are saying that there will be fighting." He shivered. " Will there be fighting, sir?"

" You know as well as I do that this is just a routine trip," I said. I wanted to reassure him. " It was a thousand to one chance that they would have men here too."

" It's certain that the identification is correct? " he asked. He was like a man asking for a second opinion when his doctor has pronounced a sentence of death.

" Of course it is," I said brutally. " Who do *you* think they are, local inhabitants? "

The bald officer heard me say it. I suppose I was speaking a little loudly. The bald officer chortled. He had a great record from the war. More fighting for him was just a better chance of getting promotion. He got to his feet and walked across to us. He'd given up the idea of the fire which disappointed me. I tucked my hands under my armpits, trying to look like it wasn't a way of warming them.

I pretended that I didn't see the bald one approaching. I said to the young soldier, " Our mission is reconnaissance, but if they come into this area we will oppose their transit, and if that means that we fight, then we fight, and that means all of us." It wouldn't do the bald one any harm to hear me saying it.

The bald one said, " The C in C will go out of his mind if

anyone deserts from this mission." He was wiping the palms of his hands on his tunic.

The young one's head jerked up and looked from one to the other of us. " Desert? " he said. " What chance would anyone have of getting back alone? "

" Good man," I said. " We are all in this together."

" Listen, son," the bald one said. He prodded the young soldier on the chest. " You think about yourself too much, that's your trouble."

The young soldier blushed and I wished that they would both just forget it. It was natural that the youngster should be a little on edge and the way I saw it I had guided him back to normal, but the bald one couldn't leave it that way.

I said, " How about the fire? Do you think you can do something with it? "

" No," said the bald one. " I can light a fire anywhere using anything. If I give up, it's impossible."

He enjoyed the privileged arrogance towards his superior officers that a really fine combat record provided. I nodded, for I knew that what he said was true.

" Listen, son," he said again. " Did you ever wonder why those apes are up here. It ain't to enjoy the view. If they came up here and kept to the other side," he pointed vaguely towards the big strange-shaped outcrops of dirty rock around which we all had the feeling they soon would come. " If they don't come along that pass there, then no one is going to worry them; but if they poke their dirty faces around that . . . zonk!" He made a movement with his hand that left us in no doubt that it would all be very easy. Perhaps this was the best way of reassuring the youngster.

" That's right," I said. " They are here for strategic purposes: from here they can launch an attack that would leave our cities decimated and our women and children dead."

The sun dragged itself over the skyline like a half drowned man. The air was crisp and clear up here and the sun seemed gigantic and redder than I had ever seen it before. I wondered if my mother would see this same sun when it moved far enough across the heavens to spill its light into a new dawn for the lands we had left. We watched the spread of pink light and behind us I could hear the noises of the main unit awakening. Even before reveille ended I could hear the metallic sounds of weapons being checked. They were good men, well-trained, uncomplaining and loyal. I wondered if the events of the day would give me cause to change my opinion of them.

The kitchen detail brought me breakfast. It was wheatcakes. I ate one, but my stomach muscles had grown tight, and I sent the rest back. I took off my helmet and wiped my head; I felt beads of sweat in the close cropped hair. The sentries changed with much saluting and stamping of feet.

The orderly officer reported to me, " Special garrison. On duty, sir." I returned his salute with a parade ground precision. The wind cut through the wintry sunshine as I walked along the ranks of the small company. Their clothing was creased—there was no sort of laundry facilities here—by tomorrow's dawn a lot of them might be past worrying.

" Soldiers," I shouted. They looked at me rather strangely. I suppose it was a little theatrical this mode of address, but no matter, I continued, " Soldiers: today you will make history that your children will read. Free men will always be called upon to make sacrifices that freedom may continue to survive. The veterans among you will remember other battles from North Africa to France, in which men died in order that the younger of you could grow up in freedom. Now you in turn are asked to do the same thing. You belong to the best equipped, most scientific fighting machine that the world has ever known." I was watching them carefully; it seemed to be going well. " We didn't come up here to fight; but we brought weapons with us because our government knew that these people who use the word ' peace ' so frequently, who profess to bring brotherhood and prosperity, have nothing but hatred and envy in their hearts.

" The Commander in Chief has asked the Senate to send a full task force to our support, but until they get here the eyes of the world are upon us." I casually fingered the eagles on my insignia. They watched me. Then while the high flown words I had deliberately used held them dazed I issued a rapid series of orders. " Communications detail report to your officer for special instructions, special duty men stand fast. Kitchen detail break camp. Advance party move north under your commander's orders. All remaining personnel on parade with weapons and entrenching tools in ten minutes. Parade, to your duties—dismiss."

They broke away at high speed. The urgent attention to detail would drive all other thoughts from their minds. I watched them scurrying like ants.

The bald officer walked across to me. He undid the strap of his helmet, yawned and dropped the helmet to the ground. " You think all that stuff does them any good? "

" Don't you? " I said.

" Not a chance," he said, " but if it makes you feel better, O.K."

He took out a flask, shook it, and then gulped a mouthful down.

" They don't believe that junk any more than you do," he offered me the flask. I was a bit annoyed and it was on the tip of my tongue to have him standing at attention shouting affirmative monosyllables. He must have read my mind for he shook his head slowly, and said, " No, it's too late for that."

I nodded too, and accepted his flask and took a long drink. I should have done it hours before. I pulled a face as it tore a warm furrow through the soft earth of my gut.

" They know as well as you do," he went on, "they know that the Senate don't even know that *we* are up here let alone those monkeys, and that even if your communications boys do rig up some way of . . . aw, it was a good idea." He mimicked my voice on parade, " Communications detail report to your officer for special orders—but those communications boys are the biggest set of loudmouths this side of the Capitol, they won't stay fooled for more than ten minutes."

I nodded. " I suppose we all expected it to turn out this way," I said.

His mouth curved. " I sure did," he said. " I said we should have finished these babies twenty-one years ago. Instead of which we put our name on a peace treaty with them." He paused. " I hate them," he said simply.

" There's too much to do to waste time hating," I said. " Too much to build. We should have been working together instead of the two halves of the world rattling swords at each other. You've seen enough combat, you've seen just how destructive war can be when it's waged scientifically; how can you want to fight? " I shivered in the icy wind. "Aren't the elements enemy enough? "

"Aw," he spat a long trajectory spit, " you make it sound all right, but wait till you see these monkeys."

" I've seen some combat," I said huffily.

" Oh, I know you have, sir," he said, " but you haven't come into contact with these guys before is all I'm saying." The soldiers had nearly finished forming up in battle formation now. " They are such a mixture of races and nationalities that they can't even understand each other." He picked up his helmet, put it on and tightened up the belt holding his side-arms. " You'll see," he said.

The scream cut through the air like a spurt of blood. There were three of them, their uniforms were torn and mudspattered.

Behind them a fourth man was running holding his side and leaving a trail of red spots, each one a little bigger than the last. The whole unit had broken formation now as the three men of the advance party ran past them without even a glance at the comrades with whom they had been soldiering for years. The fourth man was level with me now and I stepped out to get in his way. When he raised his eyes they were huge and swimming in tears. "You said they were *men*," he shouted at me. "You said we'd be fighting against *men*." It was the young officer I had spoken with. He tore himself away from me and began scrambling down the rocky steep slope that led back the way we had come. "Come back at once," I yelled. "Come back— I'll have you executed." It was no use; the rest of the men had sniffed the wind of panic and now they too began to climb down the hillside. A few more hardy ones stood in the roadway and looked the way the four men had come, and within a few minutes they too saw the sight the others had seen, and they too gibbered with fear.

"Don't be afraid," I said. "Some of us have seen them before. They are controlled by men like us, no matter how large they may look."

Two soldiers lay down on the sharp rock and screamed an entreaty that was a mixture of prayers and oaths that somehow summed up a mankind that had witchcraft just under the skin of science.

Other men were ripping their hands and legs on the outcrops of rock as they half fell, half ran away. Always away. "Alive," I heard everyone shouting as they fled. "They are alive. They are alive."

"Who could have believed it," I asked, as I stood there with the bald officer; just two of us between the invader and the rich lush land of Italy. "Who could have believed that Hannibal would bring elephants over the Alps?"

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NUMBER PLEASE!

"You'll hardly believe it," remarked one clubman to another, "I forgot my own telephone number just now."

"I remember mine," said his friend, "because it consists of 4 different figures in descending order of value, and happens to be my car number reversed. Moreover, the two numbers added together come to 14553."

What was his telephone number, please?

For baffled readers, the answer is on page 167.

He was not in fact—ordinary

THE LIGHT-BOY

BY EDITH PARGETER

THE boy with the name of a god was standing among the tamarinds at the edge of the clearing when they came, one shoulder hitched easily against a tree, his thin brown thumb just piercing the membrane that covered the first sweet juice-pocket of a palmyra fruit. Before him, beyond the trees, the tumbled sandy rocks were piled, the dark mouth of the cave-temple cool black in their hot redness; and beyond again was the wide waste of beach and the infinite blueness of the sea. Behind him was the narrow road, and on the other side of it the squat houses of the village. All through the day he had one ear cocked for any sound of a car approaching by that road; but this time there had been no car. The two women walked out of the trees below him, close to the temple, on the dusty path from the Mission settlement.

One of them was an Indian woman from Madras, with a green and gold sari, and jasmine flowers in her coiled black hair; but the other was an Englishwoman, tall and fair-haired and slender in a sleeveless cotton dress. True, she carried no camera, but by the winged sun-glasses and the un-Indian sandals, and the very walk, aloof and a little self-conscious, the boy recognised a migrant. He put down his palmyra fruit against the bole of the tree and came running, eyes and teeth flashing in an eagerness and purpose that looked all too familiar.

"Oh, God!" said Rachel. "Even here!"

Sudha turned her head, following the blind, hooded stare of the sun-glasses, and saw the boy bearing down upon them at a headlong run, beaming gleefully. She lifted an indifferent shoulder. "Oh, well, we're fair game. Did you think you'd be immune in Anantanayam?"

"I suppose it was too much to hope for. But after all, Andrew's

a resident. He's been digging and teaching and doctoring here for four years now. I hoped I might get by under his shadow, and be tolerated, anyhow—a resident by courtesy."

"How's he to know you're connected with Andrew? It doesn't show yet. Now if you'd been staying in his house—"

But that was exactly what Rachel had not wished to do. It would have committed her too far, and she was not yet sure how far she wanted to go. Andrew Cobb was a pleasant enough

person, she respected and liked him, but she wasn't sure of anything beyond that.

They had met at a cocktail party in New Delhi; she couldn't even remember now how she had come to be invited to such an improbable function. She had wandered aghast among the sophisticated chatter of nylon-sari'd ladies with lacquered western faces and pointed scarlet nails—slender, languid males in dinner-jackets, expatriate English merchants and officials—thinking of the beggars in Old Delhi, and the labouring poor clinging to life by its fringes, aware that these people were insulated from that outer world with disastrous thoroughness by their cars and their servants and their calculated want of imagination. Andrew Cobb had come as a breath of fresh air, blurting out, as they encountered in the crowd, exactly what she had been wondering, "For heaven's sake, what are you doing in this shower?"

A big, energetic, blunt-jawed man of nearly forty, so she had seen him; a good, pig-headed, upright medical missionary, so her Aunt Mildred had afterwards recalled him. A doctor first and a schoolmaster second, who ran an Anglican school and clinic attached to the archaeological site of Anantanayam, far south in Madras State. Within ten minutes, heaving breaths of the spiced evening air into him as if he were stifling, he had seized Rachel by the arm and invited her urgently to get out of there with him. And since, whatever else he might be, he was undoubtedly real, she had gone with him gladly, and sat out the evening in a small restaurant up-town, listening as he talked about the sculptural school of Mahabalipuram, that ebbed to its remotest ripple just where the archaeologists of Anantanayam were digging, and his medical practice, and his colony of precarious converts, of whom he spoke as of unpredictable children.

Later she had talked in her turn, telling him about her three-month's visit to her scattered relatives here, and about the tour south which she was planning in March. And something, too, of the bewilderment, disillusionment, doubt and hope with which India had presented her since the day of her arrival. This he had understood; he had been through the same throes. And did it, later, begin to fall into proportion and make some kind of sense? He still hoped it would, he said ruefully, some day.

And it was then that he had invited her to his remote and minor settlement, looking at her across the table with the first spark of calculation in his eyes. She had observed it, and been experienced enough to recognise it. He was lonely, and she was congenial; and where was the harm in inviting the acquaintance to unfold, and waiting to see what kind of growth it achieved?

Their recent experience of the insulated bubble-civilisation of wealthy India had shown them how to value each other.

So she had come. From Madras it was not so far. But she had come cautiously, jealous for her freedom and respectful of his. If she had come alone he would have insisted on her staying in his own household, but she had brought her friend Sudha with her, and made her the excuse for taking the travellers' bungalow at the edge of the beach. Nothing but a narrow plantation of young trees between the compound and the sands, deep, wide, honey-pale, with that incredible sea beyond, shading from aquamarine along the rim to the dark cobalt of the deep water. Southward, the Bay of Bengal opened into the Indian Ocean. The waves were too rough for good swimming, but to bathe there was a delight, and the view from the windows of the bungalow was beautiful beyond belief.

Andrew had accepted it humbly that his own cramped quarters by the schoolhouse could not possibly compete, and had made no attempt to persuade her to alter her plans. With Sudha presiding over the domestic arrangements he could be easy about the comfort and propriety of her stay. And this neat and convenient distance between them gave him time to think before he did anything irretrievable; his good Scottish blood would appreciate that.

The boy arrived before them gleaming and panting, and halted with bare toes spread in the sand. He was slender and small, his head came no higher than Rachel's shoulder. He might have been eleven or twelve years old, she judged, but it was difficult to put an age to him. He stood straight and easily, embracing them both in a broad, white-toothed smile. No mendicant palm crept out wheedlingly, and no throaty whine fished for small coins. She saw that she had mistaken him. He was not ordinary, he was not a beggar. He had a rope knotted round his waist over the brief khaki shorts and tattered brown shirt, and an old-fashioned glass-sided lantern slung by a loose yard or so of cord from one hip. He held the lamp up before them by the metal ring at the top, and addressed Sudha confidently in Tamil.

"We were both wrong," said Sudha, contemplating him with a quizzical smile. "This one works. He wants to show us the shrine."

"I am Subramanya," announced the child in English, in the voice of honey and gravel to which Rachel had become accustomed, but with a large dignity all his own. "I am light-boy."

"It seems it's quite dark inside the temple," said Sudha. "He says we wouldn't see anything without his lamp. All right, Subramanya, you lead the way."

"Are there still priests here? We're allowed inside? Even me?"

"No priests," said Subramanya, beaming. "You come with me, I show you the god. You come this way."

He pattered before them to the rough steps that led up from the first outcrop into the low face of sandstone, and there paused to open his lantern and put a match to the wick. The light was feeble enough, the corners of the glass panels ingrained with smoke from long years of use; but he held it up towards the velvet black of the entrance as if he had been lighting princes to their coronation.

The façade was borne aloft on three rough pillars, with a relief of apsaras in flight over the lintel. A small temple it was, perhaps never used as a temple at all, only as a study in design and carving, like some of those at Mahabalipuram. The deep chamber within was carved out of the living rock. Three paces into it, and the day fell away behind them, and the chill of stone closed on them with the darkness. The boy held his lantern high before them at arm's-length, so that his thin little body might cast no shadow to complicate their footsteps.

Because she had thought him a beggar running to blackmail her for new pice, and felt herself recoil from him in weariness and revulsion, Rachel found herself deeply and penitently aware of him now as a person. Proud, conscientious and self-respecting, a small working man bent on earning his fee, he went before her carefully, step by step; and the deeper he led her into the cave, the brighter and taller grew the flame of his lamp.

"Subramanya!" she said. "That's a fine name you have."

The long lashes rolled back from his dark eyes as he looked up at her and smiled brilliantly. "Do you know who that is—Subramanya?"

"Yes, I know. He's the same as Karttikeya, the son of Siva. The beautiful one," she said, to distinguish him from Ganesh, who was also the son of Siva.

He laughed aloud with pleasure, and the lantern waved and danced. "Yes, you are right!" He was delighted with her for knowing. Was it possible that tourists so rarely even took the trouble to read a little before they came here? It had seemed to her an obvious enough thing to do, and she was ashamed of the glow of achievement his response gave her.

"But this is a shrine of Vishnu, isn't it, not Siva?"

He said: "Yes, of Vishnu," but he said it with a vague smile and a lift of expressive shoulders, as if it mattered very little. "Here, on the walls, see—all the comings of the god. Eight times he came."

Deep within the rock and lost to the outer light, the chamber in which they stood was yet quite small, and all its centre taken up by a great recumbent mass of stone, on which, for the moment, Subramanya turned his back. First he must show the deep reliefs on the walls, four on either side. He reached a hand to lead Rachel carefully along after him, holding up the light to each panel as he came to it. Thicker, vaguer, coarser carving than the best she had seen, but with the same passionate movement and flow. The dynamic figures and haughty superhuman faces loomed out upon her in the flickering light, every shadow gouged deep into blackness.

"This is Varaha. You see? He came as a boar, because demons had captured the earth goddess and buried her deep underground, but the Lord Vishnu dug her out with his tusks."

For every avatar there was a reason, every strange form of divine incarnation had its own logic. He led her through them all, as ardently as if he saw the carvings and told the stories for the first time. Behind her, Sudha rustled her silks against the stone, and the scent of her jasmine flowers revived in the coolness and the dark.

"And the last but one is Rama. And the last of all is Lord Krishna. All Vishnu. All God. And he will come another time."

He turned at last to the centre of the chamber, and laid his hand with a possessive gesture on the long curve of a great stone thigh. The lantern, held aloft over the reclining figure, showed them Vishnu sleeping. More than lifesize, the vast, graceful body filled the circle of light and jutted out beyond it. Subramanya lit it for them piecemeal, beginning at the head. This was a solitary Vishnu, unattended by the heavenly beings she had seen afloat above him at Mahabalipuram, watched over no longer by his consort Lakshmi, stripped even of the cobra-hood canopy and the tall crown. An older Vishnu, perhaps, and a simpler—austere, beautiful and remote. His body was half-naked, thinly-carved draperies covered his loins. The pure, still features of the great face balanced death and sleep. Rachel was aware of a loneliness and a sorrow that reminded her of something closer to her own experience, and for a moment groped in vain for the key to her memory.

The great hewn slab of stone, the stretched body, and the

monumental hands laid lax and calm, drew curtain after curtain for her, and showed her the image she needed. There was no instant of revelation, only the knowledge with her suddenly that these things had always been one. This noble and withdrawn figure could have been a Christian sculpture of the entombment. The face was not less lovely and lonely and sorrowful. The body contained no less surely all the doom of mortality, all the promise of immortality.

"It's strange," said Rachel aloud, "he makes me think of my own God."

"Strange?" said Subramanya, puzzled. She saw the delicate brown face for the first time utterly grave, lit sharply from above as he held the lantern high. "It is not strange. He *is* God."

"My God, as well as yours?"

"Of course. Everybody's God. Why not? Yours, mine, everybody's."

"If we have the same God," she said, faintly smiling, "why do the priests here refuse to let me into the shrines?"

The white and gleaming smile flared again, disdainful and amused. "Oh, priests!" said Subramanya scornfully. "But *I* show you everything here. I hold the light for you, and you see something that is your own as much as mine. That is not strange."

She was silent a moment, pondering. The boy, untroubled, unable to understand what she should find here to trouble her, waited innocently, watching her.

"You have so many gods, though," she said. "Some that don't resemble mine at all."

The eloquent shoulders lifted again serenely. "Why not? God is everything."

He felt no need of further explanation, and perhaps he could have provided none. What he knew he knew, but his dealings were not in words. Ganesh, Hanuman, Kali, Gajalakshmi—what did it matter? Even the many personages had themselves many shapes and many names. Parvati was many, Siva many, Vishnu, this sleeper in the rock, many. Many times incarnated, and still to come again. And every avatar, Varaha, Rama, Lord Krishna, every one was still Vishnu. And Vishnu and Lakshmi and Siva and Parvati and Hanuman and Ganesh and Subramanya, and all the others, all were God.

"But creatures seen so differently," she said, feeling her way towards this subtlety in him which she had so dangerously mistaken for simplicity. "So many, and so varied—and all one? Is that possible?"

"Look," said Subramanya triumphantly, "I show you!"

He held his lantern momentarily over the majestic face, and then caught her by the hand and drew her with him, circling the long couch of stone to the distant corner of the chamber. He lifted the light high. Only a glimmer shone upon the soles of the large, calm stone feet.

"You see? Is he any less God when we see only his feet? Do you think his face is not still there?"

She was silent a long time considering that, until Sudha sighed and yawned, and suggested that they had seen enough. She emerged into daylight again still considering it. Subramanya had already put it by and forgotten it; he had no need to remember the logic which lived and breathed in him. He was chattering gaily rather about his parents and his little sister, when he set his lantern down on the stone steps, opened the glass door and turned down the wick. He blew out the flame, and a thin curl of grey smoke spiralled upwards for an instant and was gone. Flame and smoke, light and darkness, lived together inside the cage. Was there any need for a greater diversity than that?

They gave him more money than he expected, and he was pleased.

He walked with them halfway to the settlement, and talked merrily all the way. His father, he said, was one of Cobb Sahib's servants, he kept the garden at the school. But their own house was at the edge of the village; he pointed it out as they went, a low clay shape like all the rest. His little sister was learning to be a dancer. When she was bigger she would go to Madras. If the memsahib was staying here, and if she liked, Shantila would dance for her.

Nothing is rarer than to make a pure human contact; and nothing can happen so simply and naturally when it does happen. By the time he smiled his good-bye to them over his prayerfully-folded hands at the edge of the road, and darted back to his post and his neglected palmyra fruit, she knew it was not with her half-rupee that she had won him.

"I made a friend today," she said to Andrew that evening over coffee, on the verandah of the bungalow he was visibly seeing now as small and inadequate. His manner towards her was becoming, she thought, at once more relaxed and more proprietary. He had produced her to his nurses at the clinic and his staff at the school with the air of one displaying something not yet possessed, but possession of which he was certainly contemplating.

"It's a lucky person who can ever say that," said Andrew cautiously. "Who is it?"

"The light-boy at the temple. He showed us round there this morning."

"Ah, Subramanya! He's not a bad boy. Comes of a Christian family, of course."

She was startled chiefly by the instant and dismaying reaction she felt at hearing this, as though her recollection of him shrank; as though he had somehow been belittled.

"Really? I shouldn't have guessed that. Not that it arose, actually." But hadn't it? Was not some kind of answer to that speculation comprehended in the answers he had given to a larger question?

"His father's my gardener," said Andrew. "I know the family well. My predecessor here converted the grandfather. Yes, he's a nice boy, quick and reliable. As Indians go!"

Why was it, she wondered, watching him steadily in the yellowing twilight, with the sea-wind coming in cool and fresh after the heat of the day, why was it that when he dropped some such phrase as that, quite simply and without malice, she felt herself recoil in such marked revolt? He gave all his energy to his life here, and his life was helping these people. He was right not to be hypocritical about the failings he found in them. He had as much right to his own standards and attitudes as they had to theirs, and certainly more control over them. He had adapted more painstakingly to their ways than they did to his. Nor had she any justification for feeling superior.

She had come here gratefully because he was a refuge to her after too much experience too suddenly swallowed. She had come baffled and irritated by the contradictions of wealth and poverty, by the venality of much that she saw, from the buyable people in high places, through the hotel clerks discreetly black-marketeering in sterling, to the malevolent gangs of children pestering for alms, the servile and insolent room-boys, the predatory priests never content even with the most generous of offerings. From all this she had turned eagerly to an English acquaintance with standards like her own, a feeling for time, a sense of responsibility, and words which meant what they said.

And yet he had only to say something like that, and she knew that they stood on different ground. At that tone in his voice, patient and tolerant though it was, she remembered how much more congenial, on board ship, she had found the Indians than her own countrymen, and how the missionaries, in particular,

had clung together in a close little clan, and mixed less than anyone aboard with their different fellow-creatures. She remembered to detach herself from her own prejudices, to distrust her own reactions; she reminded herself that she was the creature of her upbringing and environment, however carefully she tried to stand apart from them. She saw that all that dismayed her here was at least in part her own creation. And she was willing to wait, to continue an alien, to be rejected, to be exploited, if that was the necessary reverse of all that delighted her, the occasional acceptance, the unexpected communication, the momentary belonging.

"If you want someone to take you about while I'm busy in the clinic, mornings," said Andrew, placidly unaware of any disquiet in her, "you might do a lot worse than Subramanya. He knows everybody in the village, and quite a lot about the dig, too."

She took him at his word; and in the few days of her stay she thought much of the light-boy, and spent a good part of her time in his company. With this child, at least, she had no doubts of her welcome, or of the reason for it. He enjoyed her as she enjoyed him. It might be only the courteous brushing of fingers, but at least they touched.

When he invited her into his home she entered with reverence. A small, bare, clean living-room, one shelf with a faded wedding photograph, an asthmatic wireless set, a low mat bed covered with a threadbare rug; and behind a drab curtain, the tiny kitchen hot from brazier fumes, a stained clay oven, and two garish pictures, one on either side. Rachel put off her shoes at the doorway, and made her ceremonial "Namaste" to a thin, worn woman who was Subramanya's mother. Like the field workers of the south, she wore no blouse under her sari, and the folds kilted almost to her knee. She had nothing to offer but a glass of water. Rachel drank it and thanked her, aware of a special and undeserved happiness.

Not until she was waist-deep in the sea that afternoon, braced against the rough waves, did she realise what she had seen in the kitchen. On one side a cheap, highly-coloured paper print of Christ, soft-faced and appealing, on the other a doe-eyed, tender-mouthed Krishna, blue-tinted and womanish, with his flute at his lips.

And she had seen no discrepancy, no contradiction. They were so profoundly alike that there was no distinguishing between them except by the blueness and the beard and the flute—superficial differences by any measure. The very same too beautiful,

effeminate, sentimental art, the flowery beauty that poverty and deprivation and wretchedness need. Necessarily a distant, hampered and imperfect view, perhaps the buckle of a sandal, a little-toe nail, but still a particle of the god. Of God.

Rolled in the ultramarine shallows, refreshed and languid and at ease, she found no fault with this dual vision. All the pantheon of India had begun to fuse into a unity for her. All the pantheons of the world.

She did not realise how strong a tide was carrying her; she went with it and was content. She watched Shantila dance, and listened to Subramanya's monotonously-sung accompaniment, and learned to distinguish *abhinaya*, the mimed interpretation of ballads and songs, from the stylised movements of pure dance. Classical Indian music as yet only confused and excited her, but the popular music of weddings and folk-songs she found astonishingly approachable. And how quickly, how very quickly, someone else's fairies and gods become one's own, familiar and dear. She had only to watch Shantila cross her ankles and poise her lifted fingers on the invisible flute, and Lord Krishna was there before her, in all his youth and beauty and antique innocence.

She was changing after her bathe, on the fifth afternoon of her stay, when she heard Andrew come tramping heavily up the steps to the verandah, half an hour ahead of his usual time. Sudha was still snoring delicately under her mosquito-net, for to Sudha the afternoons were made for sleeping rather than swimming. If Andrew called out, he would wake her. Rachel opened the door an inch or two and said softly, "I'll be out in a moment. There's fresh lime soda in that covered jug in the cooler. Get one for me, too, will you?"

He was stretched out in one of the cane chairs when she came out to him a few minutes later, still towelling her wet hair. He looked up at her with a brief, preoccupied smile that faded quickly into a grimace of discouragement; and yet she had a strange impression that somewhere at the heart of his unexplained mood there was an odd little glow of satisfaction.

"What's the matter? Has something happened?"

"Oh, nothing I shouldn't have been prepared for, I suppose. It's only too ordinary. I finished early," he said, "and thought I'd get the car out and run you over to the south beach or somewhere. I looked in at the village, thinking I might find you there. I didn't, but I found something else." He was groping deep into his bush-jacket pocket. "You won't believe it," he said, sour enjoyment unmistakable in his voice now.

After more than a month in India there was not much she would have had difficulty in believing. She said so, but the serenity in her tone did not seem to be what he expected of her.

"I thought Subramanya's people might know where you'd be, so I called in there. This will show you what these people are really like—unreliable, two-faced, born without sincerity. You think you've got them, and it's like holding water in your hands. You'll understand now what I'm up against. For three generations these people have been professing Christians. And look what they had pinned up on the kitchen wall! Right beside a picture of Christ!"

He whipped it out on to the table and unfolded it before her eyes with a gesture of bitter triumph. She let the towel fall into her lap, and sat for a long moment with her eyes fixed upon the garishly-coloured, flamboyantly-printed page, its glossy surface seamed now with sharp white folds like scars. Lord Krishna's flute was bent, his round, girlish arm broken. The delicate, effeminate, blue-tinted countenance with its fawn's eyes was deformed by a slashed cross.

She sat looking at it, and her face was thoughtful, mild and still. She said nothing at all.

"I'm sorry!" said Andrew, stretching and relaxing with a sigh. "I don't know why I had to take it out on you, it isn't your fault. But you see how devious they are. You can't trust them an inch."

No, from his point of view perhaps not. And certainly one could argue, she thought reasonably, that knowing what they know, they ought not to profess conversion from one creed to another. What isn't worth keeping isn't worth giving up, and why change one illusion, one voluntary mutilation, for another? One more aspect of divinity came graciously enough to him; how could he possibly realise that he was expected to make it, from then on, the only one? Like sealing up against the sun all the windows of your house but for one small casement. Like voluntarily walling yourself into a dark tower with one narrow loophole, when you could be outside lying in the grass.

"You made them take it down?" she said, smoothing the edge of the spoiled picture with one finger, her voice quiet.

"Well, of course!" he said, astonished, and stared at her blankly.

"Why of course?" She looked up. "They have the right to believe and worship as they please."

"Certainly," agreed Andrew stiffly. "As they please, and whichever they please. But not *both*!"

Almost pleasurably, as in a half-dream, she heard her own voice saying, "Why not?"

"*Why not?*"

He sat up rigidly in his chair, staring at her with dropped jaw and horrified eyes.

"Yes, why not?"

She turned the picture and smoothed it out before him. "Did you look at the other one carefully? Colour the face blue, forget the beard, and make this fellow put down his flute, and you'd hardly know them apart. Two gentle, plaintive, pretty faces. People made them exactly alike because they needed exactly the same from them. True, we're looking at the likeness on one of its lowest planes, but the same holds good higher up, you know. All that is different in them is the conventions. Why not both? They're one and the same."

He was clinging to the arms of the chair as if the world had begun to rock under him. He stared under knotted black brows, trying to grasp the magnitude of her blasphemy. His jaw worked, and he couldn't speak. He drew a convulsive breath and whispered creakingly, "You're not serious! You don't know what you're saying!"

"I am serious. Do you mean you've never really caught a glimpse of it? In four years? Everybody who ever got as far as imagining the inevitability of God was looking at the same sun through his own particular little window. The view doesn't even vary so very much, not until the creeds become businesses. When the priests move in, and start cornering, and organising, and retailing what the saints left freely about the world for everybody to enjoy, then the distortions and perversions begin. But that doesn't alter the first principle. Nothing can."

"You're just being deliberately perverse! I don't see the slightest resemblance between this— this thing— and the church calendar they've got there on the wall beside it. That's all very facile talk about the two pretty faces; I know our almanacs aren't great art, just as well as you do. But supposing this had been Hanuman, or Ganesh, as it very well might have? What then?"

The heat with which he had begun this outburst cooled quickly, she heard the note of security steady in his voice again, and was sure in her heart that he could not be shaken. In a moment he would be sounding indulgent, reminded to his comfort that she had been in India no more than four or five weeks, and was only running true to beginners' form in knowing everything.

"It wouldn't have mattered," she said simply. "I thought

this might have made it easier to see, just the fact that it was Krishna. But it makes no difference. They're all aspects and allegories."

"And a beautiful monotheism embracing them all, I suppose, when one develops eyes to see!" He laughed shortly and angrily. "Rachel, you're not really such a fool as all that."

She looked back at him without any answering indignation, even smiled a little. "Did you ever wonder why Tagore and Gandhi so often wrote simply 'God'? Because they meant it, that's why. And long before their day Indians were leaving the evidence for us all over the place, if we cared to see it:

> 'the loving sage beholds that Mysterious Existence
> wherein the universe comes to have one home;
> Therein unites and therefrom issues the whole:
> The Lord is warp and woof in created beings.'

That isn't one of the desert fathers, that's the Yajur Veda."

"Well, now come down out of the clouds for a moment, and look around you, and see what goes on at ground level."

"It was right down at ground level I got all this," she said mildly. Below ground level, actually, she thought. But of course I had a lantern and a guide. "Would you believe it," she said, "I ploughed my way conscientiously through most of the Vedic translations before I left home? And it never really occurred to me that they meant exactly what they said! 'One All is Lord of what moves and what is fixed, of what walks and what flies—this multiform creation.' That's in the Rigveda. 'Our father, our creator, our disposer, Who is the only One, bearing names of different deities.'"

"There's a lofty literature to every heresy and every heathenism," said Andrew violently. "But 'If the light that is within you is darkness, how great is that darkness.'"

She had been ready to continue the argument with good will, but that stopped her. After that there was nothing to say; she had heard it as an oracle. She lifted her head and studied him with a long, thoughtful, wondering look. His darkness seemed to her impenetrable.

She relaxed with a sigh, and reached for her glass. The scarred Krishna rustled mournfully under her hand. She took it up gently. It was Subramanya who carried a lantern.

"May I have this? As a souvenir."

"Of course, if you'd like it," he said stiffly.

He got up and went to lean on the verandah rail. "Shall we

go out? It's a bit late now, but we could still go down to the Point, if you feel like it?"

But when she agreed that it was a little too late, and remembered that she had a dress to iron before dinner, he seemed, if anything, rather relieved. The whole thing must have been a shock to him. Probably he was already reconsidering about her, drawing back a little, making sure the way of retreat was still open. Maybe it was high time to move on, and leave them both a breathing-space.

She mentioned that evening, over the coffee, and in the right tone of regret and reluctance, that Sudha had to get back to Madras, and that she really ought to go with her and see about her flight to Calcutta, before it became altogether too hot to go there at all. Andrew made the right disappointed noises, and cautious feints at dissuading her, but she saw that the news was at least as welcome to him as it was to her. And Sudha, who could always be relied upon to do all things gracefully, sighed her regrets over her coffee-cup, and explained sadly that her husband was coming home from New Delhi two days earlier than she had expected him, and she must be in Madras to welcome him.

So that was that. Rachel knew exactly how it would end. They would part on the best of terms; but after the first dutiful letters of thanks and valediction they would let each other drop, gently and gratefully and once for all. No hard feelings. But it was just as well to have found out in time.

She went down in the morning towards the cave-temple. The boy with the name of a god was sitting on his heels in the sandstone portico, with a long blade of grass between his teeth. He spat it out when he saw her coming, and joined his long brown hands beneath a dazzling smile. She sat down beside him on the steps, and opened the flat, cardboard folder she carried.

"Subramanya, this afternoon I'm going away, back to Madras."

"I shall be sad," he said, but so serenely that it was plain he would not remain clouded for long.

"I brought you back this."

She opened the folder between them on the step. She had pressed the picture between the folds of a linen towel, but the thin white scars would never come out. She looked at the mutilated face, and was aware of belated anger. What right had anyone to distrain on a poor man's possessions in the name of religion? What happened to courtesy and decency, before a fundamentally good man could so forget himself?

"Why did you let anyone force you to take it down? It was

your property, you had a right to hang it wherever you liked."

He looked at her gravely, but without any distress, his large eyes wide open to the sun. "It did not matter so much. It is only a picture. Cobb Sahib is like a child about pictures. You must go gently with children, when they do not understand."

"Yes," she said, for some reason gloriously reassured, even though Andrew would surely remain a child to the end of his self-sacrificing days in this place, and never come near understanding of the thing he had done or the forbearance extended to him. "Yes, I suppose so."

"He is a good man. It would be wrong to hurt him."

He pricked up his head alertly, looking beyond her towards the road. A car and its attendant dust-cloud rounded the curve of the village, the first tourists of the day. Subramanya tightened the cord round his waist and hitched the lantern expectantly against his hip.

"Lord Krishna is not jealous; he knows, he will wait. Some day Cobb Sahib will stop caring so much about images, and look for God."

That was perfect, there was nothing more to be said. He had illuminated everything.

"Take my picture with you," he said suddenly. "I don't need it. It was mine, I bought it, I give it to you."

The car had stopped in the arc of gravel by the road; two men were getting out, festooned with cameras. Subramanya rose to go to his duty.

"Not because it is a little spoiled," he said, turning on her his sudden, blazing smile. "I like it better now, because you brought it back. But I give it to you."

"Thank you, Subramanya. I'll keep it gladly."

"To remember me," he said, already skipping away from her with one bright eye upon his clients; but he turned once more before he left her, and joined his hands in a last salute. "Namaste!"

"Namaste!"

He ran away from her as he had run towards her on the first day, headlong and eager, clutching his lantern firmly by the ring at the top. As she drew back into the trees with the card-board folder under her arm she heard him announce himself magnificently to the newcomers, a stride before them at the edge of the sandstone outcrop, with the instrument of revelation uplifted proudly in his hand.

"I am Subramanya. I am light-boy."

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The first time we heard the story of Mtsensk's Lady Macbeth was at Covent Garden as the libretto for Dmitri Shostakovich's rich and strange music in Katerina Ismailova.

This opera had a great success when it was performed in Moscow for the first time in 1934—but when just a year later, the government sponsored *Pravda* condemned it as immoral and unsuitable for all right-thinking Soviet wives, it was heard no more !

It is certainly strong and highly colourful and you will enjoy the reading of it even more if you can picture the superb Maria Callas as the fierce and passionate Katerina.

LADY MACBETH OF MTSENSK

BY NICOLAI LESKOV

THE great house was like a prison to her. Coming from a very poor family, she was accustomed to freedom—to bathing in the river in her shift, and gay gossip at the front gate, teasing the boys who loitered outside by pelting them with sunflower seeds. Now all she had was the big house, quiet and empty; lamps glimmering before the icons in the tidy rooms, the windows shuttered and watch-dogs prowling inside the high fence.

There was nothing to do but yawn, doze, and wander from room to room.

She was not a beauty, but there was a warm, dark attraction about her: she was small and slim, with rounded breasts, black eyes, and soot-black hair. It was hardly to be expected that she should be in love with her husband, a widower whose first marriage had lasted for twenty years. She had had no say in the match—her parents had jumped at the chance when Zinovy

offered for her, since he and his father owned a large mill and were among the wealthiest people in the district.

A child to care for would have given her life meaning—God knows she longed for one—but none came. As well as her boredom she had to bear Zinovy's taunts for this, and the silent reproach of his old father Boris. It was a dull life that Katerina led in the big empty house with the two elderly, indifferent men. Is it to be wondered at that matters turned out as they did?

They had been married five years when the big dam burst and Zinovy was obliged to spend all his days and nights out at the mill superintending the repairs. Katerina found his absence something of a relief.

One mild spring day, tired of yawning at the window, she flung an old cloak over her shoulders and sauntered out into the garden. Birds were building and squabbling in the orchard trees. She could hear bursts of laughter coming from the barn.

She strolled over to the weighing-machine where a group of men had gathered.

" What's going on? " she asked.

Then she saw the fat red face of Aksinya, the cook, who was stuck in the flour-vat, laughing and cursing as she tried in vain to scramble out.

" Why, ma'am, we're weighing a fat pig! " one of the young men called out gaily. He had a bold, handsome face and curly black hair. " She's so heavy after her dinner we haven't weights enough to balance her! " and with a careless thrust he tipped Aksinya sideways on to a heap of sacks.

" Wait till I get at you, you devils! " the cook shouted good-naturedly, shaking out her skirts.

" What do you suppose I weigh? " Katerina asked, laughing, and she stepped on to the balance-plank. The young man, Sergey, put on a couple of weights.

" Why, good lord, madam, you're a featherweight—only seven stone! I could carry you about in my arms all day and never notice you—it would be a pleasure! "

" What nonsense! You'd soon get tired," Katerina answered, blushing a little.

" Don't you believe it! I'd carry you hundreds of miles."

"Anyway," she teased him, " it's strength that weighs, and I'm terribly strong."

" Is that so? Give me your hand."

" Oh! You're hurting! Let go of my rings! " she cried, and struck him on the chest with her fist so hard that he staggered backwards.

" You want to fight, eh? " Sergey challenged jokingly.

" Come on, who's afraid? " she mocked him, but next moment he picked her up, squeezed her so tight she could hardly breathe, held her high in the air, and set her down gently on the flour vat.

Suddenly an odd silence fell. Katerina, blushing deeply, picked up her cloak and walked out of the barn without saying a word, while the men started working again. The cook followed Katerina and, as they crossed the yard, they heard Sergey gaily urging on the others to work faster.

" He's always after the girls, that Sergey! " Aksinya grumbled. " Bold as brass! "

" Has he been working here long? "

"About a month. He was at the Konchonovs' before, but got the sack." She lowered her voice confidentially. " They say he had an affair with the mistress! "

The mild spring twilight had fallen. Katerina sat alone, cracking sunflower seeds at her window. Zinovy was still away, her father-in-law had gone to a party, the servants were all in bed. Sergey, the last to go, walked whistling round the yard and unchained the watch-dogs.

" Good night," Katerina called to him softly.

He did not answer. But two minutes later there was a gentle tap at her locked door.

Her heart began to beat fast. " Who is it? "

" Don't be afraid. It's me—Sergey. May I ask you something, madam? "

Katerina unlocked the door. " What do you want? " she asked.

" I wondered if you'd have a book I could read, madam. I'm so terribly bored."

" I haven't any books, I'm afraid," she said. " Why are you so bored, anyway? "

" Well, what sort of a life is it here, I ask you? It's like living in a monastery! "

" Why don't you make friends—get married—"

" Married? " he said. " That's a joke. Who'd want to marry one of the girls here, ignorant sluts that they are? What do they know about love? And who else could I get? Now if I could find someone like you, ma'am—but they keep you in a cage, like a canary. Aren't you bored? You wouldn't even be able to take a lover, as some of them do—you'd never be able to see him."

" Yes, I am bored," she said, sighing. " If I'd had a child things would have been better."

" They say children don't come without love, don't they? Now

I—" his voice trembled—" if it were only a question of love. Do you know that song, madam, *Without my love, my heart's breaking*? That's just how I feel. At this very moment I'm so unhappy that I could cut my heart out and throw it at your feet . . ."

" You shouldn't talk like that," she said breathlessly. " You'd better go."

" No! No, please! " He took a step nearer to her. " Don't you see? I *know* how you feel—I understand you! But you—" he sank his voice to a whisper, " at this moment *you* have the power to open the door of the cage! "

" What do you mean? What do you want? " Suddenly Katerina was panic-stricken. " I shall jump out of the window! " she threatened, moving away from him. But he followed.

" Darling sweetheart, don't do that! Why should you be afraid of me? " he murmured, and he put his arms round her and held her tightly.

" Let me go. Let me go! " she whispered, but in spite of herself she began to return his kisses and pressed closer against his strong young body.

He picked her up and carried her to the bed. Silence fell. The only sound that could be heard was the tick of Zinovy's watch, hanging on the bedpost.

" You'd better go," Katerina whispered uneasily, half an hour later. " My father-in-law will lock the doors when he comes in."

" What of it? Locked doors don't keep me out," Sergey answered airily. " I can always come or go—look! " and he pointed to the pillars of the balcony . . .

Zinovy stayed away all the week, and Sergey spent every night of that time with Katerina, until one morning at daybreak old Boris, always a poor sleeper, happened to look out of his window and see the young man sliding down a pillar from his daughter-in-law's window. Old Boris wasted no time; he nipped out and caught Sergey.

" Where have you been, you dirty thief? "

" What does it matter? " Sergey said carelessly. " I'm not there now, and you can't undo what's done."

" I'll have your skin for this! "

"As you wish; I'll take my punishment," the young man said, shrugging.

Boris dragged him off to a storeroom, lashed him till he was black and blue, and left him locked up with a jug of water. Then he sent for his son. But Zinovy had heard of a wood that was for sale very cheap about a hundred miles away, had gone off to inspect it, and could not be reached.

Meanwhile Katerina discovered what had been done to her lover. She came boldly to Boris and begged for Sergey's release.

" Why, you brazen slut! Just wait till your husband gets back! We'll tie you up in the stable and give you the thrashing of your life! As for that scum, your fancy boy, I'll have him jailed tomorrow! " Boris exclaimed, enraged at her impudence.

But he was unable to carry out his threat. He ate mushrooms with buckwheat porridge for supper; at midnight he was seized with violent cramps in his stomach, began vomiting, and died before daybreak, just like the rats in the barn which Katerina used to exterminate with a white powder mixed in meal. Nobody was suspicious of the old man's death; many people die from eating mushrooms. He was buried quickly, for the weather was very hot.

Still Zinovy did not return, and meanwhile Katerina released Sergey from the storeroom and put him in her husband's bed till his back was healed. Then, completely shameless, caring nothing for what anyone might think, she went everywhere with Sergey, proud as a falcon, at her side. The servants were somewhat surprised at first, but shrugged the matter off; Katerina knew how to win them over with presents, and, as they said to each other, " If she chooses to sleep with Sergey, it's her affair; she's the one that'll have to answer for it."

A spell of oppressively warm weather set in. One afternoon Katerina had been resting with Sergey in a shaded room, but it was too hot to sleep; perspiration poured off her.

The cook knocked at the door and called that she had put the samovar out under the apple tree. Katerina turned over languidly in bed, trying to rouse herself, and found a huge tabby cat on the coverlet, rubbing itself against her and Sergey. How had it got in? Half asleep still, she tried to take hold of it, but it slipped through her fingers like a ghost. Alarmed, she sat up and looked round the room: no sign of a cat anywhere, only her darling Sergey, reaching up an arm to pull her down against him. Responding to his caresses, she forgot the cat, but later, lolling out on the rug under the apple tree, she asked Sergey what such a dream could mean?

" Just a silly dream," he said.

" Yes, but why didn't I ever dream anything like it before? "

" Who knows? What does it matter? I never had *you* before—I could only long for you from a distance—but now you belong to me! " She stretched beside him luxuriously under the dazzling roof of white blossom.

"Did you really long for me, darling?"

"How could I help it?"

"Then why used you to sing so loud and sound so gay? I used to hear you from my balcony."

Katerina wanted Sergey to talk more about his undeclared love, but he was silent. The moon rose, gilding the long grasses round them, a nightingale called from the cherry-thicket.

"Why are you so silent, Sergey? Are you tired of me already?"

"Don't be silly." He kissed her carelessly.

"That was a husband's kiss—not a lover's." He did not speak. "Why does everybody tell me that you are fickle?"

"Anyone I've been unfaithful to wasn't worth loving."

Katerina said passionately, "Let me tell you this, Sergey! It was *you* who coaxed me into loving you—I didn't want to do it! But if you leave me now—if you leave me for someone else—I shall die. I'm warning you. You'll have my death to answer for!"

He turned pale. "But sweetheart," he said quickly, "why do you talk about my leaving you? The boot's on the other foot. Any day now Zinovy will be back, and what happens then? Sergey's kicked out into the yard again, and you'll be jumping into bed with your lawful husband."

"Never!" Katerina declared, but she was delighted to see him so pale and jealous; she laughed and began kissing him.

"What's the good of it all?" he exclaimed angrily. "I should have fallen in love with someone like myself. How can I expect you to love me for ever? If only I could marry you . . ."

He accompanied his words by a burning look, which set Katerina's blood on fire. She was excited by his wish to marry her; such a declaration always flatters a woman, however intimate her relations have already been with the man.

"Don't worry, darling," she whispered, covering his lips with the palm of her hand.

The old clerk, dozing in the barn, heard whispering and giggles from the garden, as if naughty children were plotting tricks against their elders, and then loud, gay laughter under the apple tree, as if the water nixies from the lake were tickling someone . . .

Much later, when Katerina and Sergey were upstairs in bed, she began again to dream about the cat. It seemed to jump heavily on to her bed, first purring, then speaking human words.

"Do you take me for a cat, my dear Katerina? Don't you recognise me? I'm Boris Timofeyvich, your father-in-law. I've come back from the churchyard, where my fine daughter-in-law sent me, to see how faithfully you're keeping your marriage-vows . . ."

Katerina screamed. The cat was lying between her and Sergey, but its face was the corpse-face of Boris Timofeyvich. She woke up and lay trembling. Sergey tried to soothe her, but, though the dream faded, she could not go back to sleep.

Suddenly she heard a sound, as if somebody were climbing the yard-gate. The dogs began barking, then quieted again. A moment later the key sounded in the downstairs lock. That must be Zinovy! Katerina thought. She nudged Sergey. "Listen!"

Somebody was creeping up the stairs.

Katerina stole across the room and opened the window; Sergey climbed out on to the balcony.

"Wait there—don't go yet," whispered Katerina, throwing his clothes out to him. Then she slipped back into bed, laughing silently. She could sense her husband standing outside the bedroom door—she could almost hear the beats of his jealous heart.

After a long pause he knocked.

"Who's there?" she called, pretending sleepiness.

"It's I."

"You, Zinovy?"

"Who do you think? Open the door!"

She opened the door, then jumped back into bed. "My goodness, it's cold! Shall I put on the samovar?"

"Don't bother," he said, but she flung on shoes and a jacket and ran out of the room.

"What have you been doing all this time?" asked Zinovy, when she returned.

"Making tea," she replied calmly, pouring him a cup.

"How did my father come to die?" he demanded.

"He just died . . ." she said carelessly, passing him his tea.

Zinovy gave her an odd look. "What's this?" He picked up Sergey's woollen girdle from the bed.

"That? I found it in the garden and used it to tie up my petticoat."

"I've been hearing some other things about your petticoats," Zinovy accused her.

"Oh? What, for instance?"

"Everyone knows what you've been doing," he said angrily. "You may as well confess."

"May I indeed?" she cried, glaring at him, pale with fury. She darted from the room and reappeared next minute, leading Sergey by the sleeve.

"Well, here's my lover!" she said. "Now you can ask us both anything you want."

Zinovy was utterly dumbfounded. He stared from Sergey,

calmly leaning against the doorpost, to Katerina, who had seated herself on the bed.

" Get out! " he shouted at Sergey. Katerina quietly locked the door and put the key in her pocket.

" Come and sit by me, darling," she said to Sergey, patting the bed. " Now, my dear husband, what do you make of this? " and she thrust herself against Sergey, kissing him passionately.

Crazy with rage, Zinovy struck her a violent blow on the face and rushed towards the window. But she, running after him, seized him by the throat and flung him to the floor. For the first time he realised that he was in terrible danger. Katerina knelt on his arm.

" Hold him! " she ordered Sergey. Zinovy struggled loose and bit Sergey's throat like a wild beast. Snatching up a heavy iron candlestick, Katerina struck her husband on the head, while Sergey's hands pressed tighter and tighter round his throat . . .

" That'll do," Katerina said at last. " You can leave him now."

Fetching a wet sponge, and tucking up the sleeves of her jacket, she began calmly washing one or two bloodstains from the floor.

As Sergey picked up Zinovy's body, to carry it down to the cellar, she added vindictively, " That'll teach you not to come creeping up, spying on your wife."

Several months later, Katerina realised that she was pregnant. She went to petition the town council, asking that she should be put in charge of her husband's business, as he was still missing.

The mystery of Zinovy's disappearance had never been solved. One story had it that he had hired horses and started for home, but had dismissed the driver near the town and walked on with his bag. From time to time he was rumoured to have been seen in one place or another, but these rumours were never confirmed, and Katerina was finally allowed to take possession of the business. She lived openly with Sergey, who was treated with the respect due to her position.

But one day a blow fell. An old woman and a small boy arrived at the house.

" I am Boris Timofeyvich's cousin," said the old woman, " and this is his nephew, Fedya, who owns a half-share of the business."

There was nothing for it but to ask them in.

" What'll we do now? " Sergey said to Katerina that night. " This has wrecked our plans." He was very pale. " What's the use of owning only half a business? I would have liked you to be above all the other merchants' wives in the town. But now that wretched little brat has come and snapped up your capital I shan't

be able to do half that I'd hoped for you. I shall never be happy again."

He darted a keen glance at Katerina, and presently began to talk of other things. She did not answer. But from that time, one thought began to grow in her mind: Why should I lose all that money to a miserable, snivelling little boy, a child who hasn't done anything to earn it?

Autumn came. Young Fedya caught chicken-pox on top of a severe cold. The doctor was called in and prescribed medicine which was administered by the old great-aunt. But when she went out, as she did sometimes, to evening mass, she asked Katerina to see to it.

So one evening the old aunt went off to vespers.

"It's a long service tonight, isn't it?" remarked Sergey, coming in to the house in his thick, sealskin-trimmed coat.

"Yes," Katerina said. "It's a holiday tomorrow. There will be a long service . . . I'd better go down and give Fedya his medicine. He's all alone."

"Alone?"

"Yes—why?"

Their eyes seemed to flash messages like forked lightning from one to the other, but nothing more was said. Sergey kicked off his boots.

"Shall I bring anything?" he said quietly.

"No, nothing," whispered Katerina, and she led him downstairs. She entered the sick boy's room with a bold and resolute step.

"It's time to lie down now," she told Fedya.

"But why, Aunt? I don't want to yet."

"It's time."

"But I don't want to lie down yet!" Fedya persisted tearfully.

"*Lie down*—you must lie down!" Katerina repeated in a changed, hoarse voice, and she thrust the child back on his pillows. At the same moment Sergey, pale and barefoot, entered the room. "Come on, be quick!" Katerina snapped at him. "Hold him still, can't you?"

Sergey held the boy's arms and legs while Katerina pressed a large pillow over Fedya's face and held it down. Four minutes passed.

"He's dead," Katerina whispered. She straightened up, and the couple stared at one another over the boy's body.

Suddenly the doors downstairs shook and echoed to a thunderous knocking. The windows rattled as if hundreds of hands were banging them.

"Zinovy! It's Zinovy!" stammered Sergey, trembling with superstitious terror. He fell on his knees.

"Get up! Don't be a fool!" hissed Katerina, and she hastily arranged the dead boy in a natural sleeping position and went calmly to open the front door.

A crowd of people burst into the house. Beyond them she could see the faces of countless strangers outside in the street.

"I saw it with my own eyes!" a young mechanic was repeating over and over again to a police officer. "I looked through a chink in the shutters to see if the story was true, that she's having an affair with Sergey, and I saw the two of them, smothering someone! Committing a murder! Before my very eyes!"

Sergey was dragged off to the police station and Katerina locked in her bedroom with two guards outside the door. A crowd of curious people continually wandered in and out of the house, gazing at Fedya in his coffin and, later on, at another closed coffin. Sergey had broken down at the police station and confessed that he had been the accomplice of his mistress in not one, but two murders. He told them where to find Zinovy's body, under the cellar floor.

Katerina, when questioned, replied stonily, "I know nothing about it!" But when they made Sergey accuse her to her face, she shrugged, and said, "All right, if he wants to confess: I killed them."

"Why did you do it?" the judge asked.

"I did it for him." She pointed to Sergey, who shuddered.

The case was soon dealt with. At the end of February, Sergey and Katerina were each sentenced to be flogged in the market-place and sent to penal servitude.

On a cold, frosty morning the flogging took place in front of a huge crowd. Sergey aroused more general sympathy than Katerina. Distraught and bloodstained, branded on his handsome face, he stumbled as he came down the scaffold steps, while she, calm and disdainful, pulled the coarse convict shirt carefully over her lacerated back.

Even in the prison hospital, when they handed her new-born child to her, she only said, "Oh, take it away," and turned her face to the wall without one tear or groan. She was waiting. She was not interested in the child, which, as Zinovy's legal heir, was given to the old cousin to look after.

She thought only of the day when she should meet Sergey again on the road to Siberia. Nor was she disappointed: heavily shackled with chains and leg-irons, Sergey was in the same convict-gang as she when they set out.

Katerina had few valuables left. She took only a coarse cotton bag with some odds and ends, and a little money. But what things she had were soon handed over to the guards in exchange for permission to walk beside Sergey, or to stand embracing him in some corner of the huts where they slept at night.

Sergey, by now, was far less loving. " You'd do better to give me the money you squander on the guard," he said sourly.

" But I gave it to see you, darling."

" What's the good of that? "

" I only gave him twenty-five kopecks."

" Oh, to hell with it all! "

Katerina bit her lip till it bled, but she endured his grumbles and remained silent.

At Nizhni-Novgorod their party was joined by a huge gang of convicts from Moscow, containing a number of women. Among these were two outstanding beauties, Fiona and Sonetka. Fiona, the wife of a soldier, was a magnificent creature, tall, with a thick plait of black hair, languorous brown eyes, and wonderful long lashes. The girl, Sonetka, was only seventeen, golden-haired, with a sharp, pretty face, dimples, and a delicate complexion. Fiona, lazy and amiable, was completely promiscuous. But Sonetka was choosy and hard to please.

At the third stop after these women had joined the march, Katerina, by bribing the guard, arranged a meeting with her darling Sergey at midnight. She lay awake in her bunk, impatiently waiting for the time to pass. Several times the man opened the door and summoned one woman or another; at last her turn came. Following the guard in the dark along the stone passage, she stumbled past several other couples.

" Here you are," he said at last, and pushed her into a corner. She felt a man's jacket and beard—Sergey; but there was a woman with him. Katerina's hand touched her hot face.

She exclaimed, " Who are you with? What are you doing? "

The strange woman darted away, but Katerina caught her and snatched off her kerchief. A burst of mocking laughter came from the men's barracks next door.

" You filthy brutel " whispered Katerina, and struck Sergey across the face with the knotted kerchief. She stumbled back to the women's quarters and fell into her bunk, but she could not sleep; she tried to tell herself that she hated Sergey, thinking of his arms round the other woman, but she could only long miserably for his embrace. By morning her pillow was soaked with tears.

" How about giving me my kerchief? " Fiona said next day.

" So it was you, was it? "

" Come on, hand over! "

" Why have you come between me and Sergey? "

" What a to-do! " Fiona said. " That kind of love isn't worth such a commotion."

Katerina threw the kerchief at her.

" Now, look here, Katerina," Sergey said later as they marched along. " Please understand that things are different here. In the first place I am not your husband; in the second you are no longer a rich merchant's wife. So don't give yourself airs. Understand? "

Katerina didn't answer. For a week she never spoke to Sergey.

He, meanwhile, began flirting with pretty little Sonetka, bowing to her with exaggerated politeness, sometimes embracing and hugging her, smiling at her with his eyes until Katerina's blood boiled within her. And Sonetka, the unapproachable, suddenly seemed to have become tamer; her eyes smiled back at Sergey.

One evening, however, Sergey begged Katerina to come to him. Joyfully she bribed the guard with her last ten kopecks and met him in the dark corridor.

" Katya, my darling! "

" Oh, you wretch! " said Katerina through tears, and pressed her lips to his. She was blissfully happy.

But presently Sergey began to complain of the pain in his feet; he would be obliged, he said, to go to the hospital at Kazan.

" What, stay behind and let me go on alone? "

" What can I do? My feet are so bad! If only I had some warm stockings . . ."

" Stockings? Why, I have a pair! "

She slipped away, found the stockings in her bag—a new, thick pair of blue wool with bright red clocks—and brought them back to Sergey. When she fell asleep later that night she was happier than she had been for a week.

But next day Sonetka was wearing the stockings.

All through the march Katerina's eyes were fixed on Sergey in a terrible stare; at the first resting-place she walked up to him and spat in his face.

From that day on Sergey taunted Katerina whenever they met; he openly embraced Sonetka, kissed her, and marched with his arm around her.

Katerina stumbled along, more dead than alive.

The weather was getting worse. Wet snow fell out of the grey sky, to melt on the muddy track. At last the convicts came to the edge of a vast expanse of rough, dark, threatening water—the Volga River. They were hustled on board the ferry boat.

Sergey, sitting beside Sonetka, called out, " I say, wealthy Mrs. Zinovy, what wouldn't I give for a drink! I suppose you haven't a drop of vodka to spare for old time's sake? Remember, my darling, how we used to pass the long autumn nights together, drinking, making love and hurrying off your family to eternal rest? "

Katerina shivered in her drenched clothes. Her burning eyes were fixed with a distracted look on the waves.

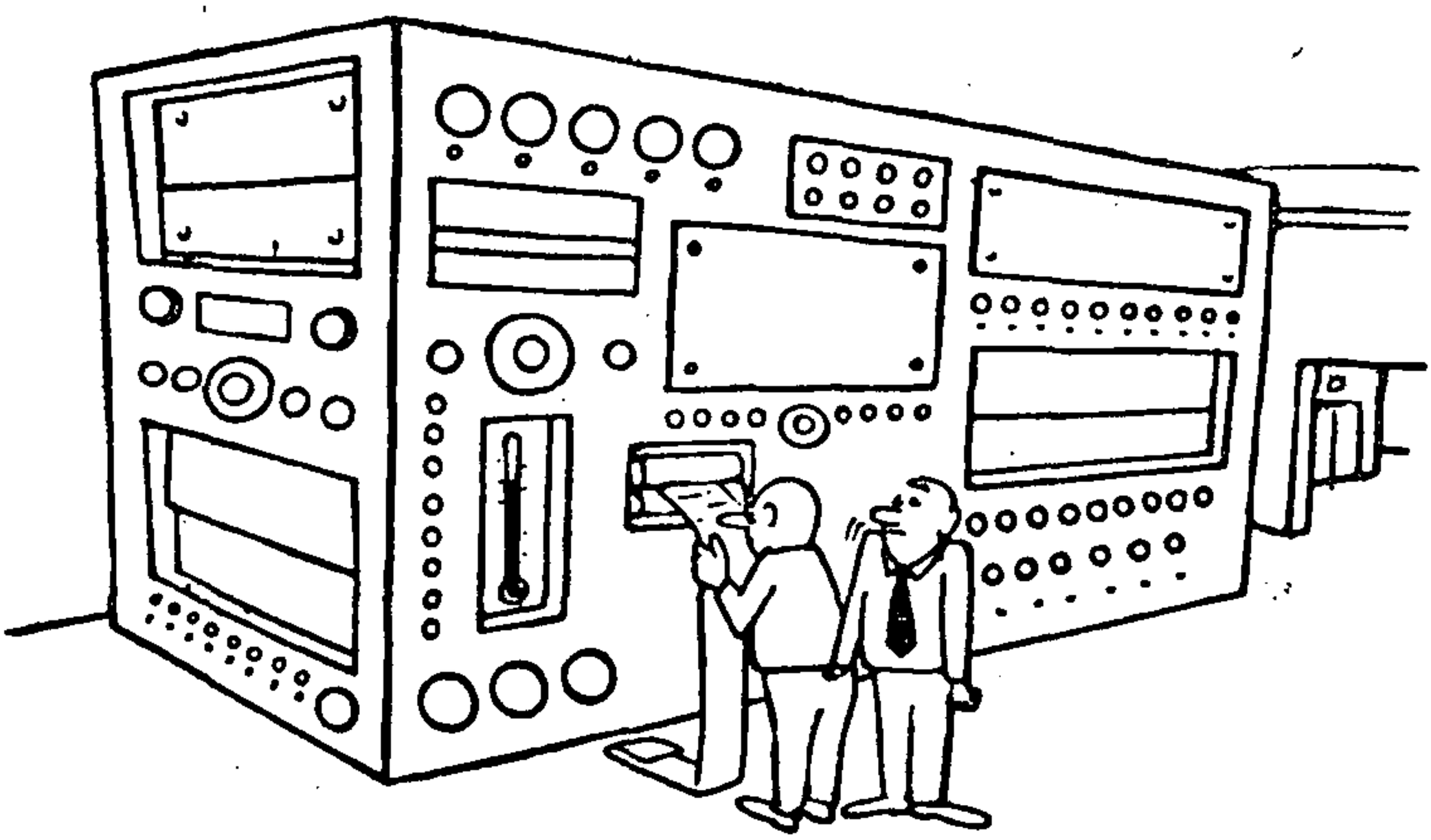
" You ought to be ashamed of yourself, teasing her so! " Fiona said to Sergey.

" Oh, who cares about her? I never loved her! " scoffed Sergey. " Sonetka's old shoe is dearer to me now than her ugly face." He went on jeering at Katerina and the convicts laughed applaudingly. Katerina said nothing; she gazed fixedly at the waves, moving her lips; in the tossing water she seemed to see the faces of her husband, and old Boris, and the boy, Fedya.

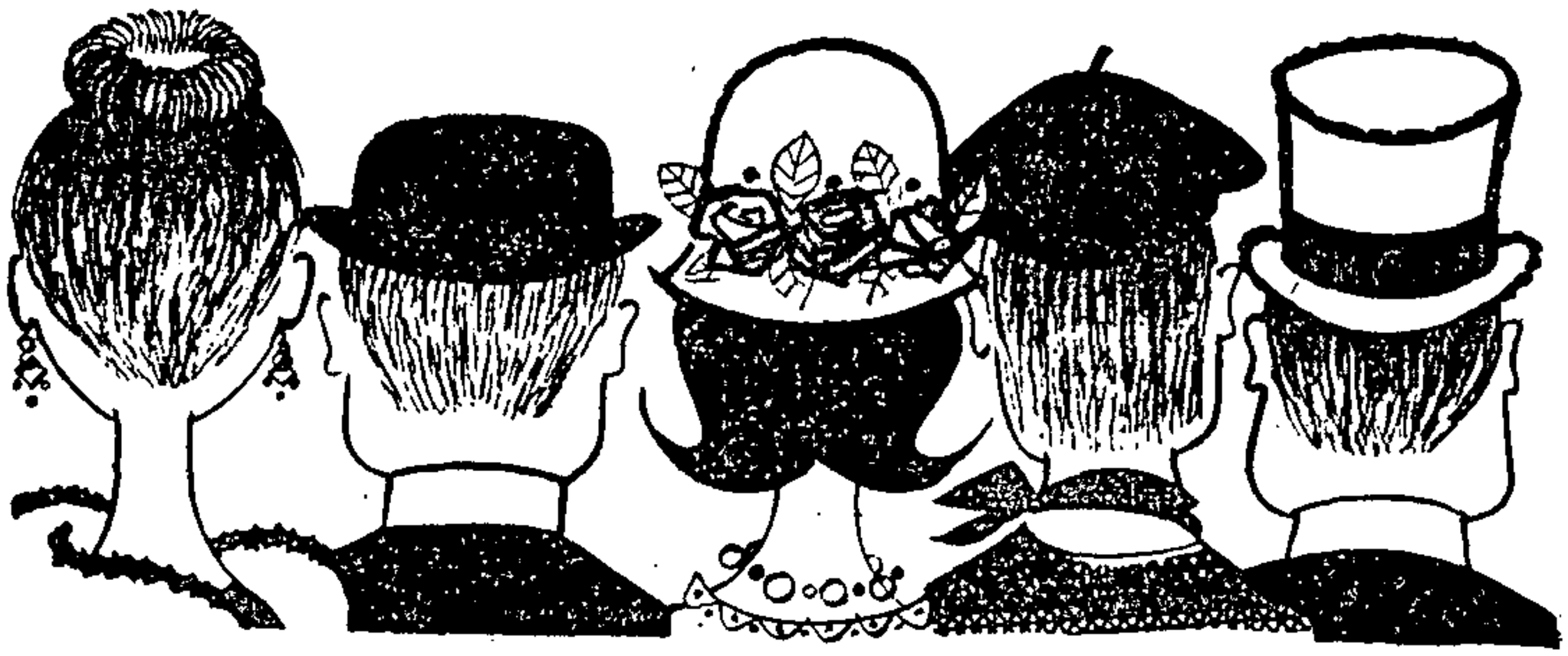
Suddenly she stood up and, without removing her wild gaze from the water, seized hold of Sonetka. With one lunge she pulled the girl overboard. Everyone froze in astonishment; then a clamour broke out. A boat-hook attached to a long rope was thrown over the side. Sonetka raised her arms from the waves to catch it, but Katerina broke from the water, throwing herself on the other girl like a strong pike on a little perch, and pulled her under.

Neither of the two was seen again.

Retold from the Russian by Joan Aiken



"... Professor Perkins is picking your pocket ..."



It's a man's world

The fickleness of the women I love is only equalled by the infernal constancy of the women who love me.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

The drake and the two ducks came swimming towards them—the drake, of course, in the middle, looking very handsome and pleased, and at a little distance the third duck pursued her rejected and disconsolate courtship. Whenever she approached too near, the drake rushed at her with open beak, and drove her back. Then she affected not to know where she was going, wandering in an aimless, absent-minded fashion, getting nearer and nearer her recalcitrant drake. But these ruses were wasted upon him; he saw through them all, and at last he attacked the poor broken-hearted duck so determinedly that she was obliged to seek safety in flight.

GEORGE MOORE, *Celibate Lives*

A Grain of Salt

Of all the wimming doubly blest
The sailor's wife's the happiest,
For all she does is stay to home
And knit and darn—and let 'im roam.

Of all the husbands on the earth
The sailor has the finest berth,
For in 'is cabin he can sit
And sail and sail—and let 'er knit.

WALLACE IRWIN

Dark-haired and young . . .

" But what did you do? " Maria asked.

"All things," the woman said. " We went to the beach and lay in the water and boats with sails were hauled up out of the sea by oxen. The oxen driven to the water until they must swim; then harnessed to the boats, and, when they found their feet, staggering up the sand. Ten yokes of oxen dragging a boat with sails out of the sea in the morning with the line of the small waves breaking on the beach. That is Valencia."

" But what did thee besides watch oxen? "

" We ate in pavilions on the sand. Pastries made of cooked and shredded fish and red and green peppers and small nuts like grains of rice. Pastries delicate and flaky and the fish of a richness that was incredible. Prawns fresh from the sea sprinkled with lime juice . . . All the time drinking white wine, cold, light, and good at thirty centimos the bottle. And for an end; melon."

"And what did thee when not eating nor drinking? "

" We made love in the room with the strip wood blinds hanging over the balcony and a breeze through the opening of the top of the door which turned on hinges. We made love there, the room dark in the daytime from the hanging blinds . . . and I lay with my back against a pillow at the foot of the bed and watched him sleep, brown and dark-haired and young and quiet in his sleep . . ."

ERNEST HEMINGWAY, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*

The Reason Why

The fundamental reason that women do not achieve so greatly as men do is that women have no wives. Until such time as science or economics corrects this blunder of nature we shall remain, I fear, the inferior sex.

PROFESSOR MARJORIE NICHOLSON, *of Columbia University*

Seduced and Betrayed

. . . That all women, of whatever age, rank, profession or degree, whether virgin maid or widow, that shall from and after such Act impose upon, seduce and betray into matrimony any of His Majesty's subjects by means of scents, paints, cosmetics, washes, artificial teeth, false hair, Spanish wool, iron stays, hoops, high-heeled shoes or bolstered hips, shall incur the penalty of the law now in force against witchcraft, and like misdemeanours, and that the marriage upon conviction shall stand null and void.

Act of Parliament, 1770

Woman's View

I have loved as women love
Who dream romantically of such
As moon and stars are fashioned of,
Asking little, giving much.

You have taken eagerly,
Loving, as a man may do,
With hands that hold so tenderly,
And then have other things to do.

DOROTHY MOFFATT, *The Difference*

Thanks Be To God

Then my husband came in, who locked the door; and, the shutters being already bolted, there we were alone together.

When he had taken off his clothes he climbed into the bed with a Bible in his hand. He kissed me tenderly, and began to read me out a portion from the Canticles, where Solomon praises his mistress for her beauty, likening her belly to an heap of wheat, and her breasts to two young roes which are twins. Then he closed the book, after he had put a petal or two of the rose between the leaves, as a remembrance; and spoke very lover-like and sweetly to me, but in some foreign language, which sounded so uncouth that I believe it to have been the Syriac or the Aramaic.

Then I must get out of bed again and kneel down beside him, and give thanks to God for his Infinite Bounty that he had created us male and female, with a deal more which I repeated after him. When our Amen was said he lifted me back again between the sheets and caught me in his arms and trembled with strong passion. When I said nothing but lay numb and stark, he raised my head, saying "Ah, modest reluctancy—I admire you!" and presented a cup of wine to my lips. I sipped a little, but though I had resolved to please him I could not catch the infection of his passion.

ROBERT GRAVES, *Wife to Mr. Milton*

General Review of the Sex Situation

Woman wants monogamy;
Man delights in novelty.
Love is woman's moon and sun;
Man has other forms of fun.
Woman lives but in her lord;
Count to ten, and man is bored.
With this the gist and sum of it,
What earthly good can come of it?

DOROTHY PARKER, *Not So Deep as a Well*

I wanted to show him up proper . . .

JACKIE THE JIBBER

BY BRIAN GLANVILLE

IT was him, our barber, that give me my name: *Jack the Jibber.* Jibber? Well, it means jibbing in, don't it? Getting in places without paying. I can't remember the last time I ever paid to see anything; football, boxing, dog-racing, there's nearly always a way, but of course it's boxing that's my speciality.

Me old man, he's a porter up the market at Covent Garden like I am. He's dead proud of me. He says, " He's done the impossible, Jack has," and it's true, really. I mean, I've jibbed in at places you wouldn't think you could *dynamite* your way in—not without a ticket—and never been caught; not once.

Anyway, like I was saying, the barber . . . he give me the name, after something I done at Earl's Court. It was the night Jim Pacey was fighting the American, Dundas, for the welterweight title, and you couldn't move for police; there was two cordons of them, right the way round the stadium. I'm standing outside the main entrance and wondering how I'll get through, when just at that moment the barber comes along.

He says, " How's it going, Jack? " and I says, " At the moment, it's very, very poor; but I'll be in."

Well, the police weren't too bad, there's a way of dealing with police, you just got to show you ain't afraid of them, because that's when they get on top of you.

I said, " Will you kindly let me through, officer, I'm one of the seconds? "

At the next cordon, I done it again, but I still had to get past the commissionaire, and that wasn't going to be so easy. He's standing there at the turnstile, the one I've picked out, a big bloke with a red face, wearing the old uniform—they're all ex-Army; pigs, most of them. I says, " I'm Andy Cummings'

brother—" that's one of the fighters "—he's got me ticket for me, inside."

The bloke says, " I don't care who you are, you can't come inside without no ticket."

So I go on arguing with him and, in the end, I make as if I'm going to climb over the turnstile and he gives me a push, which is what I been wanting him to do. So I comes down right on the turnstile and I says, " Oh! Oh! You've discolated me knee! I'm going to sue the company! "

Well, that worries him properly—he changes his tune then; he says, " I'm very, very sorry, boy; here, you'd better come through." And you know what the end of it was? I got down ringside and I finished up sitting in the barber's seat, that he'd paid three guineas for.

Looking at me, you wouldn't think I done all these things, because I mean, in appearance, I'm just an ordinary London boy, nothing to look at. But this is a help, I always reckon, because if you don't look like nothing in particular, then it's easier to disappear. Of course, you got to have a bit of style as well, you got to be able to turn it on, like, now and again.

There was this time I was up at Manchester, at Belle Vue. Dave Kelly was fighting for the British title; lightheavyweight, and where he goes, I go. He's my favourite, Dave, he's a marvellous fighter; I jibbed in all over the country to see him, Wembley, Harringay, Manchester, Leicester. I even went up as far as Glasgow—I jibbed the train ride and all.

Anyway, Belle Vue; it's usually dead easy in the North, because up there, they don't really know—it's not like London. Only I had Ted Williams with me, this mate of mine, and I got through all right, but the commissionaire stops him.

He says, " Where's your ticket, then? "

Ted was well embarrassed, he was well embarrassed. But I just turned round and said, " He's with *me*, my man."

Dave won that night, he took the title. He's got a big heart, that's what I like about him. A lovely left hand, too—I'm not denying that, but what I like about him is his heart; he'll never lie down, Dave won't. I seen him go on with a cut eye, a really bad one, the blood was pouring down his face, when even his corner wanted him to pack it in, but he went on, and in the end he stopped the other fellow, by my life, he stopped him in the thirteenth round.

But you got to think quickly, jibbing. Like this other time, Dave was fighting at Harringay, against this American, Joey Harper, and the bloke stops me and asks for me ticket, just as

I'm walking through. Well, I'm fumbling around, trying to think of something, when this other bloke comes along and he stops him, too, and he says, " What about *your* ticket? " and he says, " I already shown it to you," and I says, " That's what I done, isn't it? "

Soon as Dave come into the ring that night I was there, just like I always was: " Hullo, Dave. All right, then, Dave? " and he'd be looking for me, he'd give me a smile, because I think he reckoned I brought him luck. I even been up in his corner, once, the night he defended his British title at Wembley against Lennie Haynes. I got a photo and all, to prove it—holding up his robe for him to put on. One of the attendants tapped me on the shoulder and he says, " What do you think *you're* doing there? " and I looks at him and I says, " *Do* you mind? " I says, " I'm only the bloke that's holding the champion's robe, that's all," and he apologised.

Me father used to get worried at times; he'd say, " You got to watch it, Jack, they got more ways of killing the cat than drowning it, that lot has." I knew what he meant, but that added to it, if you see what I mean; knowing they'd probably sort me out if they got hold of me.

They done it with this other jibber, this Morrie Bass from out Edmonton way, that used to jib the Cup Final at Wembley Stadium. Year after year he'd be there, out on the field with the winning team, always in the photos. Then one year they come after him and grabbed him, and the police got stuck into him somewhere under the stand; there was half a dozen of them, he told me.

But I said to me father, " Don't you worry, Dad, they won't catch Jack, I got a trick or two up me sleeve."

Because this other fellow, he was asking for it; I mean, running out on the field every year in front of a hundred thousand people, and the Queen and all . . .

It was when I give this interview to the journalist that it all started getting difficult. Afterwards, I was sorry I done it. I don't know how he even got on to it—somebody must of told him—but anyway he come over to me one night between fights at Shoreditch, when I was sitting ringside—I'd slipped into one of the Press boys' seats—and he said, " You're *Jackie the Jibber*, ain't you? "

I says, " I don't know what you're talking about; I'm from the *Hackney Telegraph*,"—it was the first name that come into me head.

But he says, " That's all right, Jack, I won't give you away son, I heard a lot about you, that's all; I'd like to write an article on you. Come off and have a drink with me afterwards, eh, and we'll have a little talk about it."

So I went with him and we had a few drinks—in fact I reckon I must have had a few too many, because in the end he quoted me saying things I wasn't entitled to have said, like I was too clever for the lot of them, they'd never caught me and they never would, and the day I paid for a ticket to get in a boxing-match, that'd be the day a English heavyweight would win the world title.

It all come out in the paper next day, one of the evening papers, it was; JACKIE THE JIBBER, THE BLOKE THEY COULDN'T CATCH, THE HOUDINI OF BOXING.

The old man said, " Ay, ay; you didn't ought to have done that, son, you've challenged them, they'll be after you, now."

I said, " Well, they ain't got me picture; they don't know what I look like."

He said, " No, but they'll be looking for you."

In fact, the very next day in that paper they had an interview with the promoter of the fight, with Sam Dyment—who I'd never liked what I'd seen of him—saying, " If Jackie does that again at one of my shows, he'll be in for trouble, I'm warning him." In fact what annoyed me was where he said he didn't believe I'd done it at all. He said, " *No*body can get into my shows without no ticket." He said, " Maybe he pinched somebody's seat that he wasn't entitled to, that I'm not denying, but he must have had a ticket of some sort."

I wasn't going to stand for that, and I rang up Bill Douglas, this journalist, and I said, " Is that what he told you, this Dyment?"

He says, " Yes, Jack, every word of it."

I said, " He's taking a diabolical liberty. When's his next show, then?"

He said, " It's at Wembley again, November 10."

" All right," I says, " I'll come up and I'll speak to you before the beginning of the main event, is that O.K.? You watch for me. And the next day you can put it in your paper that you seen me there, and that I didn't have no ticket. By my life, you can search me."

Because I couldn't let him beat me, see, this Dyment. If I'd of let him beat me, I couldn't of showed me face no more, I'd of been ashamed of meself. Because this was who I was, Jackie the Jibber, everybody knew me, everyone up the market, everyone round where we lived, in Southwark, and if I'd've packed up now, that would of been the end of it.

When I got to Wembley, the night he had his next show on, it didn't seem no different than usual at first; I couldn't see no extra commissionaires or nothing. The only thing was, getting nearer, they seemed to be taking much longer looking at the tickets. Then, hanging around in the background, I saw a couple of big blokes what I recognised; they'd been heavyweights the pair of them, neither of them any good, but now I'd heard they was working for Dyment round his office.

Well, I went straight up to one of the entrances, I put me hand in me pocket, then I made this face, like I'd just had a terrible shock. Then I went through all the other pockets one by one, pulling out everything that was in 'em and looking through it, and the commissionaire said, " What's the matter, mate, lost your ticket? "

I said, " No, wait a minute, it's got to be there, I remember picking it up off the mantelpiece at home before I come out, I know I did."

He says, " Maybe you got your pocket picked. You come by tube? " So I went on looking till he said, " Remember the number, do you? "

I pretends to think about it, then I says, " Yes, I believe I do; I wrote it down somewhere." Then I look at the back of an envelope and I says, " Here it is, Block Y, Row J, Seat 23."

" Well," he says, " it's lucky you done that, because we're very hot on tickets tonight, but as it is, you may get in. I'll let you through to see the box-office manager; maybe you can sort it out with him." He calls one of the other geysers over and he says, " You take him," then he lets me through into this entrance hall they've got, and we goes through the door into the sort of passageway that runs right round the whole arena. The bloke says, " Follow me," and one moment I'm following him and the next he looks round and I've gone. In all that crowd, it was easy.

I found a good seat and all, I only had to change it the once, when the fellow come up and claims it, and before the big fight started, I went up and had a word with Bill Douglas, like I said I would. Next day he had it in his paper.

I rang him up the morning after that and says, " Have you spoke to Dyment yet? What did he say? " and he says, " He nearly went up the wall; he's really looking for you now. He said, ' All right, I'll see to him, I'll get him sooner or later, it's just a matter of time, that's all.' ".

" Well," I says, " wish him the best of luck from me, then, will you? "

Me father was on at me again to give up, he says, " What do you

want to go on now for, Jack, you've proved it, ain't you? You've made a mug of him."

I said, " Yeah, but if I give up now, he'll think he's frightened me. I want to show him up proper; just once more, then I'll relin-guish me title."

About a week or so after that, I opened me paper one morning and I said to meself, " Here's me chance." Dyment had signed up Dave Kelly for a world-title fight, and he was going to put it on in the open air, at the White City.

I said to me father, " This is it, this is what I been waiting for. I'll have me picture took shaking hands with the champ, because that's what he'll be, Dave, after the fight, he will be the new champion. Then I'll relin-guish me title, like I promised."

Well, I made me plans, I had plenty of time. And when it come to the day before the fight I rang up Dyment. They didn't want to put me through at first but I said, " You let me speak to him, it's to do with tomorrow's fight, it's a matter of life and death," and in the end, they did.

I said, " Mr. Dyment? " and he said, " Who's that? " and I says, " Jackie," and he says, " Jackie who? " and I says, " Jackie the Jibber, of course! I'll be there tomorrow, I just rung up to tell you so I'll see you at the fight," then I hung up—I was killing meself. Because I'd never had no time for him, not even before all this happened, going around with his big cigar and his smile, I'd never trusted him.

A boy could go in the ring and get his brains bashed out and that'd be the end of him, and the next promotion, Dyment would still be there; he'd still be smoking his cigar and talking about how modern kids hadn't got no guts, they wouldn't go in the ring no more; I'd like to of seen *him* there. But this thing with me, this put the lid on it.

I thought, you got everything and I got nothing, and the little bit I have got, you want to take it away from me. I thought, what difference does it make to you whether I jib in or whether I don't, for the few shillings you'd get off of me if I *did* buy a ticket? It's because you want to run everything, that's why; you want to control the lot, and as far as I'm concerned, I ain't going to be controlled.

Then I rung up Douglas at his newspaper and I said, " You got a cameraman there tomorrow, and all? " and he says, " Yes we got one ringside," and I says, " You tell him to look out for me, tell him to look out for Jack at the end of the fight, in the champion's corner. That'll be Dave," I said, " he'll be the new champion," I said, " and this is me last appearance, I'm retiring

after this; you tell your bloke to take the picture. I've told Dyment I'll be there."

He put it in the paper, too:

JACKIE THE JIBBER'S LAST APPEARANCE.

I got there early that night; there was a big crowd, they expected sixty thousand. I hung about in the official carpark till this big Rolls-Royce arrived, and out got this Lord, the Steward of the Board of Boxing Control, all dressed up in a dinner-jacket and a black bow tie, and his wife all dressed in furs, and I followed them up to the visitors' entrance, straight through past the commissionaire, that said, "Good evening, sir." Then when Dyment come forward to shake hands with him, Lord Whatsisname, I done me disappearing act. There was nothing to it, because I was wearing it too, the old black tie and dinner-jacket; I'd hired them. It's amazing the difference it makes, really, the way they treat you, stewards and commissionaires and all.

I come up to the ring before the big fight, the title-fight, and I called good luck to Dave, and he looked surprised at first, and I said, "What's the matter, then, don't you recognise me now I'm dressed proper?" then he did recognise me, and he smiled.

He won it beautiful, of course; he had the fellow down three times in the eighth, lovely left-hand punching, and the fellow couldn't hurt him.

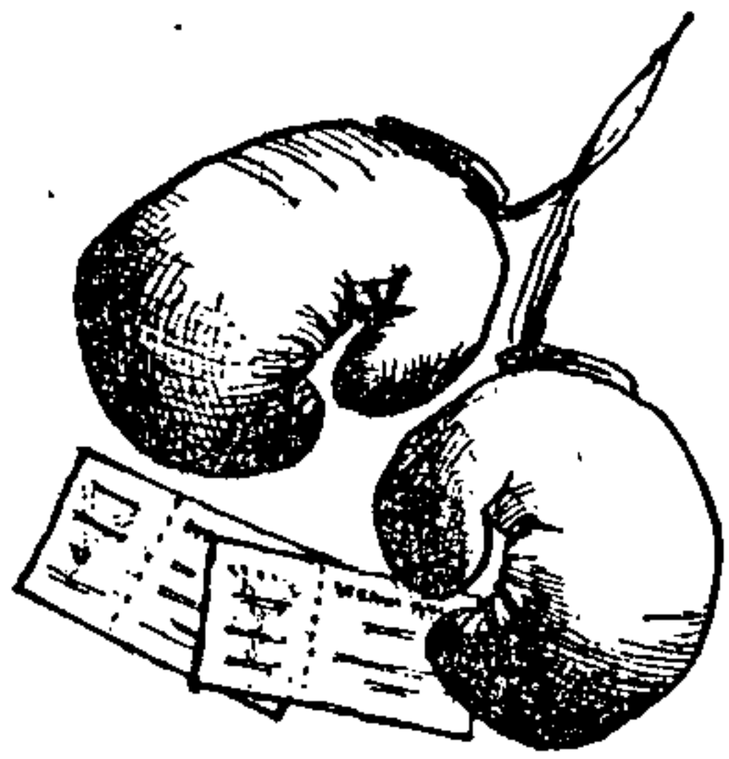
When it was over, I fought me way through the crowd, then I got through the police and the attendants—I was saying, "Board of Control, Board of Control." Then I got up in the ring and I shook hands with Dave.

I said, "Well done, Dave, well done, boy."

And the photographers was popping their bulbs all round us.

Then up come Dyment to shake hands with him as well, still with the big cigar, and when he done it I said, "Congratulations, Mr. Dyment," and I shook hands with him myself—I must have held it nearly a minute for the photographers, and he was looking at me like he knew me, but he wasn't sure.

Then I said, "That's *two* champions you just shook hands with, Mr. Dyment," and I jumped down from the ring and I was away. Not too quick though, I mean—I was wearing me dinner-jacket, wasn't I?



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A MOVEABLE FEAST

FROM THE NEW

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

IN those days there was no money to buy books.

I borrowed books from the rental library of Shakespeare and Company, which was the library and bookstore of Sylvia Beach at 12 rue de l'Odéon. On a cold windswept street, this was a warm, cheerful place with a big stove in winter, tables and shelves of books, new books in the window, and photographs on the wall of famous writers both dead and living. The photographs all looked like snapshots and even the dead writers looked as though they had really been alive.

Sylvia had a lively, sharply sculptured face, brown eyes that were as alive as a small animal's and as gay as a young girl's, and wavy brown hair that was brushed back from her fine forehead and cut thick below her ears and at the line of the collar of the brown velvet jacket she wore. She had pretty legs and she was kind, cheerful and interested, and loved to make jokes and gossip. No one that I ever knew was nicer to me.

I was very shy when I first went into the bookshop and I did not have enough money on me to join the rental library. She told me I could pay the deposit any time I had the money and made me out a card and said I could take as many books as I wished.

There was no reason for her to trust me. She did not know me and the address I had given her, 74 rue du Cardinal Lemoine, could not have been a poorer one. But she was delightful and charming and welcoming and behind her, as high as the wall and stretching out into the back room which gave on to the inner court of the building, were shelves and shelves of the wealth of the library.

I started with Turgenev and took the two volumes of *A Sportsman's Sketches* and an early book of D. H. Lawrence, I

think it was *Sons and Lovers*, and Sylvia told me to take more books if I wanted. I chose the Constance Garnett edition of *War and Peace*, and *The Gambler and Other Stories* by Dostoevsky.

"You won't be back very soon if you read all that," Sylvia said.

"I'll be by to pay," I said. "I have some money in the flat."

"I didn't mean that," she said. "You pay whenever it's convenient."

"When does Joyce come in?" I asked.

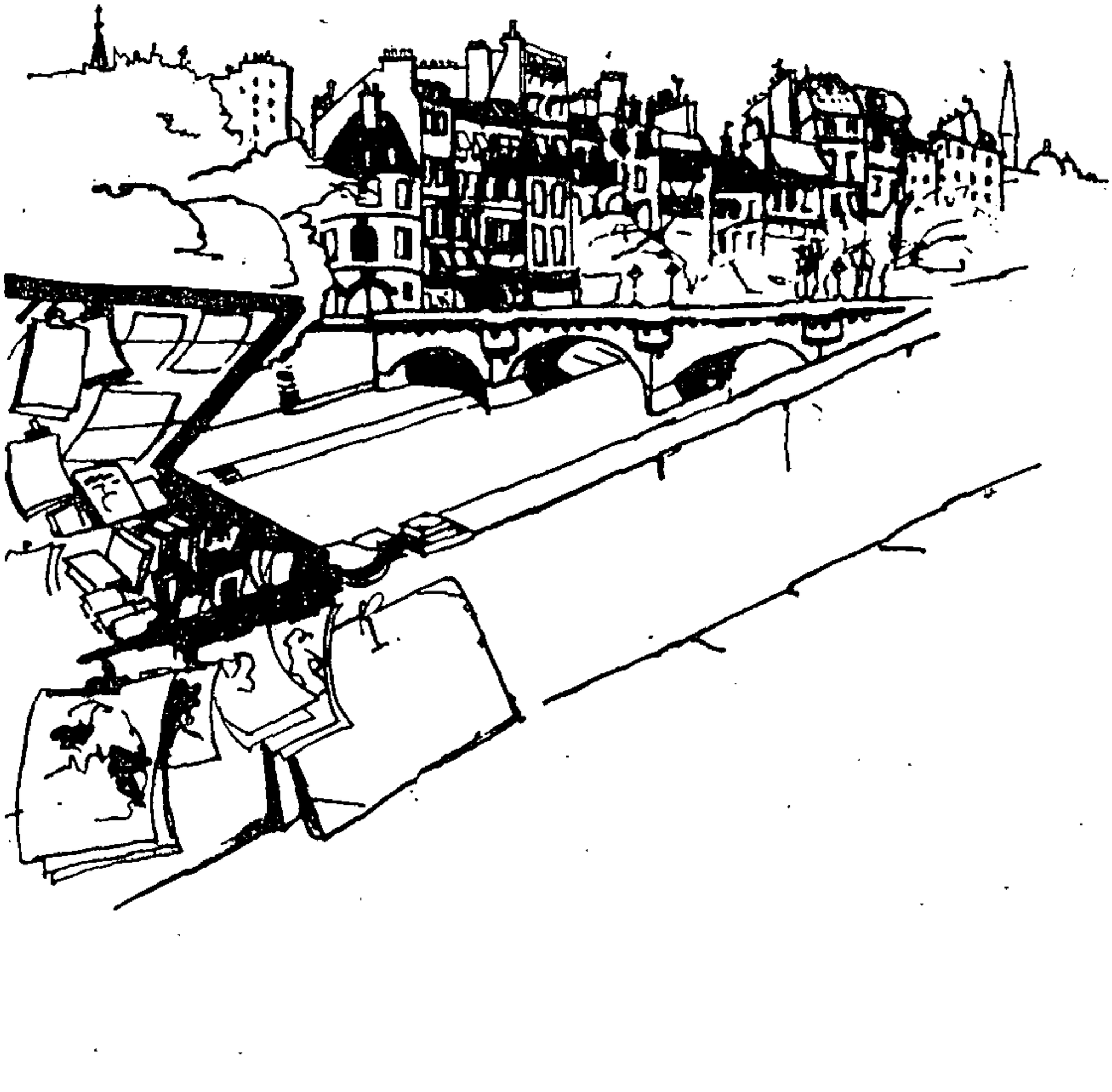
"If he comes in, it's usually very late in the afternoon," she said. "Haven't you ever seen him?"

"We've seen him at Michaud's eating with his family," I said. "But it's not polite to look at people when they are eating, and Michaud's is expensive."

"Do you eat at home?"

"Mostly now," I said. "We have a good cook."

"There aren't any restaurants in your immediate quarter."



"No. How did you know?"

"Larbaud lived there," she said. "He liked it very much except for that."

"The nearest good cheap place to eat is over by the Panthéon."

"I don't know that quarter. We eat at home. You and your wife must come some time."

"Wait until you see if I pay you," I said. "But thank you very much."

"Don't read too fast," she said.

Home in the rue du Cardinal Lemoine was a two-room flat that had no hot water and no inside toilet facilities except an antiseptic container, not uncomfortable to anyone who was used to a Michigan outhouse. With a fine view and a good mattress and springs for a comfortable bed on the floor, and pictures we liked on the walls, it was a cheerful, gay flat. When I got there with the books I told my wife about the wonderful place I had found.

"But Tatie, you must go by this afternoon and pay," she said.

"Sure I will," I said. "We'll both go. And then we'll walk down by the river and along the quais."

"Let's walk down the rue de Seine and look in all the galleries and in the windows of the shops."

"Sure. We can walk anywhere and we can stop at some new café where we don't know anyone and nobody knows us and have a drink."

"We can have two drinks."

"Then we can eat somewhere."

"No. Don't forget we have to pay the library."

"We'll come home and eat here and we'll have a lovely meal and drink Beaune from the co-operative you can see right out of the window there with the price of the Beaune on the window. And afterwards we'll read and then go to bed and make love."

"And we'll never love anyone else but each other."

"No. Never."

"What a lovely afternoon and evening. Now we'd better have lunch."

"I'm very hungry," I said. "I worked at the café on a café crème."

"How did it go, Tatie?"

"I think all right. I hope so. What do we have for lunch?"

"Little radishes, and good foie de veau with mashed potatoes and an endive salad. Apple tart."

"And we're going to have all the books in the world to read and when we go on trips we can take them."

"Would that be honest?"
"Sure."
"Does she have Henry James too?"
"Sure."
"My," she said. "We're lucky that you found the place."
"We're always lucky," I said, and like a fool I did not knock on wood. There was wood everywhere in that apartment to knock on, too.

© Ernest Hemingway, Ltd. 1964

Luck is like measles or red hair. You either have it or you don't. Hemingway had a measure of it, so did Sylvia Beach. She first came to Paris when she was fourteen but it was several years later that she became obsessed with the idea of opening her bookshop, Shakespeare and Company. She found a closed and shuttered laundry complete with smoothing irons, cabled home—"Opening bookshop in Paris please send money."

Regarded as her Patron, a portrait of the bard swung companionably from the signboard outside. Inside, smoothing irons were replaced by furniture from the flea market and newly erected shelves crammed with books: second-hand copies, the latest from America sent by her sister and two trunkfuls from England including a copy of *Three Men in a Boat*. Success came almost overnight. Joyce, Gide, Maurois and Gertrude Stein—all became regular customers. For visiting Americans it was a first port of call and for one, it held an essential place in his every day. You have read Hemingway on Sylvia Beach. *Here is Sylvia Beach on Hemingway.*

A CUSTOMER we liked, one who gave us no trouble, was that young man you saw almost every morning over there in a corner at Shakespeare and Company, reading the magazines or Captain Marryat or some other book. This was Ernest Hemingway, who turned up in Paris, as I remember, late in 1921. My "best customer," he called himself, a title that no one disputed with him. Great was our esteem for a customer who was not only a regular visitor, but spent money on books, a trait very pleasing to the proprietor of a small book business.

However, he would have endeared himself to me just as much

if he hadn't spent a penny in my establishment. I felt the warmest friendship for Ernest Hemingway from the day we met.

I looked up and saw a tall, dark young fellow with a small moustache, and heard him say, in a deep, deep voice, that he was Ernest Hemingway. I invited him to sit down, and, drawing him out, I learnt that he was from Chicago originally. I also learnt that he had spent two years in a military hospital, getting back the use of his leg. What had happened to his leg? Well, he told me apologetically, like a boy confessing he had been in a scrap, he had got wounded in the knee, fighting in Italy. Would I care to see it? Of course I would. So business at Shakespeare and Company was suspended while he removed his shoe and sock, and showed me the dreadful scars covering his leg and foot. The knee was the worst hurt, but the foot seemed to have been badly injured too—from a burst of shrapnel, he said. In the hospital, they had thought he was done for; there was even some question of administering the Last Sacraments. But this was

changed, with his feeble consent, to baptism—" just in case they were right."

Hemingway confided to me that before he was out of high school, when he was still " a boy in short pants," his father had died suddenly and in tragic circumstances, leaving him a gun as a sole legacy. He found himself the head of a family, his mother and brothers and sister dependent on him. He had to leave school and begin making a living. He earned his first money in a boxing match but, from what I gathered, didn't linger in this career. He spoke rather bitterly of his boyhood.

He didn't tell me much about his life after he left school. He earned his living at various jobs, including newspaper work, I believe, then went over to Canada and enlisted in the armed forces. He was so young he had to fake his age to be accepted.

Hemingway was a widely educated young man, who knew many countries and several languages; and he had learnt it all at first hand, not in universities. He seemed to me to have gone a great deal farther and faster than any of the young writers I knew. In spite of a certain boyishness, he was exceptionally wise and self-reliant. In Paris, Hemingway had a job as sports correspondent for the Toronto *Star*. No doubt he was already trying his hand at writing fiction.

He brought his young wife, Hadley, to see me. She was an attractive, delightfully jolly person. Hemingway's knowledge of French was remarkable, and he managed somehow to find time to read all the French publications as well as ours.

I had had the impression for some time that Hemingway was working hard on some stories. He told me one day he had finished one, and asked if I would care to hear it . . .

Of course, today Hemingway is the acknowledged daddy of modern fiction. You can't open a novel or a short story in France, or in England or Germany or Italy or anywhere else, without noticing that Hemingway has passed that way. He has landed in school books, which is more fun for the children than they have as a rule and very lucky for them!

Though the question who has influenced such and such a writer has never bothered me, and the adult writer doesn't stay awake at night to wonder who has influenced him, I do think Hemingway readers should know who taught him to write: it was Ernest Hemingway. And, like all authentic writers, he knew that to make it " good," as he called it you had to work.

Hemingway was serious and competent in whatever he did, even when he went in for the care of an infant. After a brief visit to Canada, Hadley and Hemingway came back bringing

another " best customer," John Hadley Hemingway. Dropping in one morning and seeing him giving the baby his bath, I was amazed at his deft handling of Bumby. Hemingway *père* was justly proud, and asked me if I didn't think he had a future as a nursemaid.

Bumby was frequenting Shakespeare and Company before he could walk. Holding his son carefully, though sometimes upside down, Hemingway went on reading the latest periodicals, which required some technique, I must say. As for Bumby, anything was all right as long as he was with his adored Papa. His first steps were to what he called " Sylver Beach's." I can see them, father and son, coming along hand-in-hand up the street. Bumby, hoisted on a high stool, observed his old man gravely, never showing any impatience, waiting to be lifted from his high perch at last; it must have seemed a long wait sometimes. Then I would watch the two of them as they set off, not for home, since they had to keep out of Hadley's way till the housekeeping was done, but to the *bistros* around the corner; there, seated at a table, their drinks before them—Bumby's was a grenadine—they went over all the questions of the day.

Everybody at that time had been in Spain, and varied were the impressions . . . Hemingway, unlike the others, set out to learn and to write about the bulls in his usual serious, competent manner. So we have, in *Death in the Afternoon*, a complete treatise on bull-fighting, one that my Spanish friends, the most difficult to please, have acknowledged as excellent. And some of Hemingway's finest writing is in this book.

Good writers are so rare that if I were a critic, I would only try to point out what I think makes them reliable and enjoyable. For how can anyone explain the mystery of creation?

Hemingway can take any amount of criticism—from himself; he is his own severest critic.

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SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD (SEPT. ISSUE)

Across. 1, *Amontillado.* 8, *Loco.* 9, *Apron stage.* 10, *Tusker.* 12, *Obstinate.* 14, *Eros.* 16, *Free-trader.* 19, *Aloe.* 21, *Ammo.* 22, *Butterbump.* 25, *Aida.* 28, *Desultory.* 30, *Brutus.* 32, *Port Arthur.* 33, *Earl.* 34, *America's Cup.*

Down. 1, *Amazonian.* 2, *Ogress.* 3, *Tangier.* 4, *Leapt.* 5, *Diet.* 6, *Bookworm.* 7, *Tours.* 11, *Used.* 13, *Abele.* 15, *Reap.* 16, *Feud.* 17, *Robes.* 18, *Booby-trap.* 20, *Obituary.* 23, *Tabu.* 24, *Malaria.* 26, *Gothic.* 27, *Abbey.* 29, *Error.* 31, *Spam.*

When it happens you don't believe it

SCREAMING WOMAN

BY RAY BRADBURY

MY name is Margaret Leary and I'm ten years old and in the top form at our primary school. I haven't any brothers or sisters, but I've got a nice father and mother except that they don't pay much attention to me. And anyway, we never thought we'd have anything to do with a murdered woman. Or almost, anyway.

When you're living in a road like ours, you don't think awful things are going to happen, like shooting or stabbing or burying people under the ground, practically in your back garden. And when it does happen you don't believe it. You just go on buttering your toast or baking a cake.

I'll tell you how it happened. It was in the middle of July. It was hot and Mother said to me, " Margaret, you go to the shop and buy some icecream. It's Saturday, Dad's home for lunch, so we'll have a treat."

I ran out across the bombed site behind our house. It was a big piece of ground where the kids played and there was broken glass and stuff.

On my way back from the shop with the icecream I was just walking along, minding my own business, when all of a sudden it happened.

I heard the Screaming Woman.

I stopped and listened. It was coming up from out of the ground. A woman was buried under the rocks and dirt and glass, and she was screaming, all wild and horrible, for someone to dig her out.

I just stood there, afraid, and she kept screaming, muffled.

Then I started to run. I fell down, got up again and ran some more.

I opened the door of our house and there was Mother, calm as

you please, not knowing what I knew, that there was a real live woman buried at the back of our house, just a hundred yards away, screaming blue murder.

" Mum," I said.

" Don't just stand there with the icecream melting," said Mother.

" But, Mu—" I said.

" Put it in the fridge," she said.

" Listen, Mum, there's a Screaming Woman . . ."

" And wash your hands," said Mother.

" She was screaming and screaming . . ."

" Let's see now, salt and pepper," said Mother, far away.

" Listen to me," I said, loud. " We've got to dig her out. She's buried under tons and tons of dirt and if we don't dig her out, she'll choke and die."

" I'm certain she can wait until after lunch," said Mother.

" Mum, don't you believe me? "

" Of course, dear. Now wash your hands and take this plate in to your father."

" I don't even know who she is or how she got there," I said. " But we've got to help her before it's too late."

" Good heavens," said Mother. " Look at this icecream. What did you do, just stand in the sun and let it melt? "

" Well, the bombed site . . ."

" Go on, now, scoot."

I went into the dining-room.

" Dad, there's a Screaming Woman in the bombed site."

" I never knew a woman who didn't," he said.

" I'm serious," I told him.

" You look very grave," said Father.

" We've got to get picks and shovels and excavate, like for an Egyptian mummy," I said.

" I don't feel like an archaeologist, Margaret," said Father. " It's too hot. Now, some nice cool October day, I'll take you up on that."

" But we can't wait that long," I almost screamed.

My heart was bursting in me. I was excited and scared and afraid and here was Dad, putting meat on his plate and paying me no attention.

" Dad? " I said.

" Mm? "

" Dad, you've just got to come out after lunch and help me," I said. " Dad, Dad, I'll give you all the money in my piggy bank! "

" Well! " said Dad. " So, it's a business proposition, is it? It

must be important for you to offer your perfectly good money. How much money will you pay by the hour? "

" I've got ten whole shillings it took me a year to save, and it's all yours."

Dad touched my arm.

" I'm moved. I'm really moved. You want me to play with you and you're willing to pay for my time. Honestly, Margaret, you make your old Dad feel a real meanie. I don't give you enough time. Tell you what, after lunch I'll come out and listen to your screaming woman, free of charge."

" Will you, oh, will you, really? "

" Yes," said Dad. " But you must promise me one thing."

" What? "

" If I come out, you must eat all of your lunch first."

" I promise," I said.

Mother came in and sat down and we started to eat.

" Not so fast," she said.

I slowed down. Then I started eating fast again.

" You heard your mother," said Dad.

" The Screaming Woman," I said. " We must *hurry*."

" I," said Father, " intend sitting here quietly and judiciously giving my attention first to my steak, then to my icecream, and of course to a long drink of iced beer, if you don't mind. I may be a good hour at it. And another thing, young lady, if you mention her name, this screaming whatsit, once more at this table during lunch, I won't go out with you to hear her recital."

" Yes, sir."

" Is that understood? "

" Yes, sir," I said.

Lunch was a million years long. Everybody moved in slow motion, like those films you see sometimes. Mother got up slowly and sat down slowly, and forks and knives and spoons moved slowly. Even the flies in the room were slow. It was all so slow I wanted to scream, " Hurry! Oh, please, rush, get up, run around, come on out, run! "

But no, I had to sit, and all the while we sat there slowly, slowly eating our lunch, out there was the Screaming Woman, all alone, while the world ate its lunch and the sun was hot and the bombed site was empty as the sky.

" There we are," said Dad, finished at last.

" Now will you come out to see the Screaming Woman? " I said.

" First a little more iced beer," said Dad.

"Speaking of screaming women," said Mother, "Charlie Nesbitt and his wife were fighting again last night."

"That's nothing new," said Father. "They're always fighting."

"If you ask me, Charlie's no good," said Mother. "Or her, either."

"Oh, I don't know," said Dad. "I think she's quite nice."

"You're prejudiced. After all, you nearly married her."

"You going to bring that up again?" he said. "After all, I was only engaged to her for six weeks."

"You showed some sense when you broke it off."

"Oh, you know Helen. Always stage-struck. I hadn't any time for that sort of thing. That's what broke it up. She was sweet, though. Sweet and kind."

"What did it get her? A terrible brute of a husband like Charlie."

"Dad," I said.

"I'll grant you that. Charlie has got a terrible temper," said Dad. "Remember when Helen had the lead in our school play? Pretty as a picture. She wrote some songs for it herself. That was the time she wrote that song for me."

"Ha," said Mother.

"Don't laugh. It was a good song."

"You never told me about that song."

"It was between Helen and me. Let's see, how *did* it go?"

"Dad," I said.

"You'd better take your daughter out to the bombed site," said Mother, "before she collapses. You can sing me that wonderful song later."

"O.K., come on," said Dad, and I ran him out of the house.

The bombed site was still empty and hot and the glass sparkled green and white and brown all around where the bottles lay.

"Now, where's this Screaming Woman?" laughed Dad.

"We forgot the spades," I cried.

"We'll get them later, after we hear the soloist," said Dad.

I took him over to the spot. "Listen," I said. We listened.

"I don't hear anything," said Dad, at last.

"Shh," I said. "Wait."

We listened some more. "Hullo there, Screaming Woman!" I cried.

We heard the sun in the sky. We heard the wind in the trees, really quiet. We heard a train, far away. We heard a car pass. That was all.

"Margaret," said Father, "I suggest you go and lie down and put a damp cloth on your forehead."

"But she was here," I shouted. "I heard her, screaming and screaming and screaming. See, here's where the ground's been dug up." I called frantically at the earth. "Hey, you down there!"

"Margaret," said Father, "this is the place where Mr. Kelly dug a big hole yesterday, to bury his rubbish in."

"But during the night," I said, "someone else used Mr. Kelly's burying place to bury a woman. And covered it all over again."

"Well, I'm going back indoors," said Dad.

"You won't help me dig?"

"Better not stay out here too long," said Dad. "It's hot."

Dad walked off. I heard the back door slam.

I stamped on the ground. "Darn," I said.

The screaming started again. She screamed and screamed. Maybe she had been tired and was resting and now she began it all over again, just for me.

I stood on the bombed site in the hot sun and I felt like crying. I ran back to the house and banged the door.

"Dad, she's screaming again!"

"Yes, yes, of course she is," said Dad. "Come on." And he led me upstairs to my bedroom. "Here," he said. He made me lie down and put a cold flannel on my head. "Just you take it easy."

I began to cry. "Oh, Dad, we can't let her lie. She's all buried. Think how awful it is to be screaming and no one paying any attention."

"I forbid you to leave this house," said Dad, worried. "You just lie there for the rest of the afternoon." He went out and locked the door. I heard him and Mother talking, and after a while I stopped crying. I got up and tiptoed to the window.

I took a sheet off the bed and tied it to the bedpost and let it out of the window. Then I got out of the window and climbed down until I touched the ground. I ran to the shed, and I got a couple of spades and I ran to the bombed site. It was hotter than ever. And I started to dig, and while I dug, the Screaming Woman screamed . . .

It was hard work. Shoving in the spade and lifting the rocks and glass. And I knew I'd be doing it all afternoon and perhaps I wouldn't finish in time. What could I do? Run and tell other people? But they'd be like Mum and Dad, pay no attention. I just kept digging, all by myself.

About ten minutes later, Dippy Smith came across the bombed site. He's my age and goes to my school.

" Hullo, Margaret," he said.

" Hullo, Dippy," I gasped.

" What're you doing? " he asked.

" Digging."

" What for? "

" I've got a Screaming Lady in the ground and I'm digging for her," I said.

" I don't hear any screaming," said Dippy.

" You sit down and wait a while and you'll hear her scream. Or better still, help me dig."

" I don't dig unless I hear a scream," he said.

We waited. " Listen," I cried. " Did you *hear* it? "

" Golly," said Dippy, his eyes gleaming. " Do it again."

" Do what again? "

" The scream."

" We've got to wait," I said, puzzled.

" Do it again," he insisted, shaking my arm. " Go on." He dug in his pocket for a brown aggie. " Here." He shoved it at me. " I'll give you this marble if you do it again."

A scream came out of the ground.

" Jiminy cricket! " said Dippy. " Teach *me* to do it! " He danced around as if I was a miracle.

" If you'll help dig, I'll tell you about it, later," I lied, for I wanted him to help.

" Fine," he said. " Give me a spade."

We both dug together, and from time to time the woman screamed.

" Gee whiz," said Dippy, " you'd think she was right under foot. You're wonderful, Maggie." Then he said, " What's her name? "

" Who? "

" The Screaming Woman. You must have a name for her."

" Oh, yes." I thought a moment. " Her name's Charlotte Tootle and she's a rich old woman, ninety-six years old, and she was buried by a man named Spike, who counterfeited five-pound notes."

" Gosh," said Dippy.

" And there's hidden treasure buried with her, and I—I'm a grave robber come to dig her out and get it," I gasped, digging excitedly.

Dippy made his eyes oriental and mysterious. " Can I be a grave robber, too? " He got a better idea. " Let's pretend it's the

Princess Ommanatra, an Egyptian queen, covered with diamonds! "

We kept digging and I thought, *oh*, we will rescue her, we *will*. If only we keep on!

" Hey, I've just had an idea," said Dippy. And he ran off and got a piece of cardboard. He scribbled on it with crayon.

" Keep digging! " I said. " We can't stop! "

" I'm making a sign. See? SLUMBERWELL CEMETERY! We can bury some birds and beetles here, in matchboxes and things. I'll go and find some butterflies."

" No, Dippy! "

" It's more fun that way. I'll get a dead cat, too, perhaps . . ."

" Dippy, use your spade. Please! "

" Oh," said Dippy, " I'm tired. I think I'll go home and have a rest."

" You can't do that."

" Who says so? "

" Dippy, there's something I want to tell you."

" What? " He gave the spade a kick.

I whispered in his ear, " There's really a woman buried here."

" Why, of course there is," he said. " You told me, Maggie."

" You don't believe me either."

" Tell me how you throw your voice and I'll keep on digging."

" But I can't tell you, because I'm not doing it," I said. " Look, Dippy, I'll stand over here and you listen there."

The Screaming Woman screamed again.

" No! " said Dippy. " But there really *is* a woman! "

" That's what I tried to say."

" Let's dig! " said Dippy. We dug for twenty minutes.

" I wonder who she is? "

" I don't know."

" I wonder if it's Mrs. Nelson or Mrs. Turner or Mrs. Bradley. I wonder if she's pretty. Wonder what colour her hair is. Wonder if she's thirty or ninety or sixty—"

" Dig! " I said. The mound grew high.

" Wonder if she'll reward us for digging her up."

" Expect so."

" A shilling, do you think? "

" More than that. Perhaps ten."

Dippy remembered as he dug. " I once read a book on magic. There was a Hindu with no clothes on who crept down in a grave and slept there sixty days, not eating anything, no sweets, no icecream or cake, no air, for sixty days." His face fell. " Wouldn't it be awful if it was only a radio and us working so hard? "

" A radio's nice, it'd be all ours."

Just then a shadow fell across us.

" Now, you kids, what d'you think you're doing? "

We turned. It was Mr. Kelly, the man who owned the bombed site. " Oh, hullo, Mr. Kelly," we said.

" Tell you what I want you to do," said Mr. Kelly. " I want you to take those spades and take that soil and put it all back in that hole you've been digging. That's what I want you to do."

My heart started beating fast again. I wanted to scream myself.

" But Mr. Kelly, there's a Screaming Woman and . . . "

" I'm not interested. I can't hear a thing."

" Listen! " I cried. The scream.

Mr. Kelly listened and shook his head. " Can't hear anything. Go on now, fill it up and get home with you before I give you something to remember! "

We filled the hole all back in again. And all the time we filled it in, Mr. Kelly stood there, arms folded, and the woman screamed but Mr. Kelly pretended not to hear it.

When we were finished, Mr. Kelly marched off and said, " Go on home now. And if I catch you here again . . ."

I turned to Dippy. " He's the one," I whispered.

" What? " said Dippy.

" He murdered Mrs. Kelly. He buried her here, after he strangled her, in a box, but she came to. Why, he stood right here and she screamed and he wouldn't pay any attention."

" Yes," said Dippy, " that's right. He stood right here and lied to us."

" There's only one thing to do," I said. " Call the police and have them come and arrest Mr. Kelly."

We ran for the corner telephone box.

The police knocked on Mr. Kelly's door five minutes later. Dippy and I were hiding in the bushes listening.

" Mr. Kelly? " said the police officer.

" Yes, sir, what can I do for you? "

" Is Mrs. Kelly at home? "

" Yes, sir."

" May we see her, sir? "

" Of course. Hey, Anna! "

Mrs. Kelly came to the door and looked out. " Yes, sir? "

" I beg your pardon," apologised the officer. " We had a report that you were buried out in the bombed site, Mrs. Kelly. It sounded like a child making the call, but we had to be certain. Sorry to have troubled you."

" It's those blasted kids," cried Mr. Kelly angrily. " If I ever catch them, I'll rip 'em limb from limb! "

" Scoot! " said Dippy, and we both ran.

" What'll we do now? " I said.

" I've got to go home," said Dippy. " Gosh, we're really in trouble. We'll get a hiding for this."

" But what about the Screaming Woman? "

" Forget about her," said Dippy. " We don't dare go near that place again. Old man Kelly'll be waitin' around with his strap. An' I just happened to remember, Maggie, isn't old man Kelly sort of deaf, hard-of-hearing? "

" Oh, my gosh," I said. " No *wonder* he didn't hear the screams."

" So long," said Dippy. " We've certainly got in trouble over your darned old ventriloquist voice. I'll be seeing you."

I was left all alone in the world, no one to help me, no one to believe me at all. The police were after me now, and my father was probably looking for me, too, or would be once he found my emptp bed. There was only one last thing to do, and I did it.

I went from house to house, all down the road. And I rang every bell and when the door opened I said: " Excuse me, Mrs. Griswold, but is anyone missing from your house? " or " Hullo, Mrs. Pikes, you're looking fine today. Glad to see you *home*." And once I saw that the lady of the house was home I just chatted for a while, to be polite, and went on down the road.

The hours were rolling along. It was getting late. I kept thinking, oh, there's only so much air in that box with that woman under the earth, and if I don't hurry, she'll suffocate! So I rang bells and knocked on doors, and it got late, and I was just about to give up and go home, when I knocked on the last door, which was the door of Mr. Charlie Nesbitt, who lives next to us. I kept knocking and knocking.

Instead of Mrs. Nesbitt, or Helen, as my father calls her, coming to the door, it was Mr. Nesbitt, Charlie, *himself*.

" Oh," he said. " It's you, Margaret."

" Yes," I said. " Good afternoon."

" What can I do for you? " he said.

" Well, I thought I'd like to see your wife, Mrs. Nesbitt," I said.

" Oh," he said.

" May I? "

" Well, she's gone out to the shops," he said.

" I'll wait," I said, and slipped in past him.

"Hey," he said.

I sat down in a chair. " Goodness, it's a hot day," I said, trying to be calm, thinking about the bombed site and air going out of the box, and the screams getting weaker and weaker.

" Listen," said Charlie, coming over to me. " I don't think you'd better wait."

" But Mr. Nesbitt," I said, " why not? "

" Well, my wife won't be back," he said.

" Oh? "

" Not today, that is. She's gone to the shops, as I said, but—but she's going on from there to visit her mother. That's right. She's going to see her mother in Bristol. She'll be back in two or three days, perhaps a week."

" That's a shame," I said.

" Why? "

" I wanted to tell her something."

" What? "

" I just wanted to tell her there's a woman buried in the bombed site, screaming under tons and tons of dirt."

Mr. Nesbitt dropped his cigarette.

" You've dropped your cigarette, Mr. Nesbitt," I pointed out with my shoe.

" Have I? Oh, yes. So I have," he mumbled. " Well, I'll tell Helen your story when she comes home. She'll be glad to hear it."

" Thanks. It's a real woman."

" How do you know it is? "

" I heard her."

" How—how d'you know it isn't—well—a mandrake root? "

" What's that? "

" You know. A mandrake. It's a kind of plant. They scream. I know. I read about them once. How do you know it isn't a mandrake? "

" I never thought of that."

" You'd better start thinking," he said, lighting another cigarette. He tried to be casual. " Margaret, did you—er—did you *say* anything about this to anyone? "

" Yes. I told lots of people."

Mr. Nesbitt burnt his hand on his match.

" Anybody doing anything about it? " he asked.

" No," I said. " They won't believe me."

He smiled. " Of course not. Naturally. You're only a kid. Why should they listen to you? "

" I'm going back now to dig her out with a spade," I said.

" Wait."

" I must go now," I said.

" Stay with me a bit," he insisted.

" Thanks, but no," I said frantically.

He took my arm. " Know how to play cards? Rummy? "

" Yes."

He took out a pack of cards from a desk. " We'll have a game."

" I've got to go and dig."

" Plenty of time for that," he said quietly. " Anyway, perhaps my wife'll come home. That's it. You wait for her. Wait for a while."

" You think she will? "

" Of course. Er—about that voice—is it very strong? "

" It gets weaker all the time."

Mr. Nesbitt sighed and smiled. " You and your childish games. Here now, let's play that game of rummy—it's more fun than screaming women."

" I must go. It's late."

" Stay a bit—you've nothing else to do."

I knew what he was trying to do. He was trying to keep me in his house until the screaming had died down and was gone. He was trying to keep me from helping her. " My wife'll be home in ten minutes," he said. " That's right. Ten minutes. You wait. You sit where you are."

We played cards. The clock ticked. The sun went down the sky. It was getting late. The screaming got fainter and fainter in my mind. " I've got to go," I said.

" Another game," said Mr. Nesbitt. " Wait another hour. My wife won't be long. Just wait."

In another hour he looked at his watch. " Well, I think you can go now." And I knew what his plan was. He'd sneak down in the middle of the night and dig up his wife, still alive, and take her somewhere else and bury her, properly. " Good-bye, Margaret. So long." He let me go, because he thought that by now the air must all be gone from the box. The door shut in my face.

I went back near the bombed site and hid in some bushes. What could I do? Tell my father and mother? But they hadn't believed me. Call the police? But Charlie Nesbitt would say his wife was away. Nobody would believe me!

I watched Mr. Kelly's house. He wasn't in sight. I ran over to the place where the screaming had been and just stood there. The screaming had stopped. It was so quiet I thought I would never hear a scream again. It was all over. I was too late, I thought. I bent down and put my ear against the ground.

And then I heard it, way down, way deep, and so faint I could

hardly hear it. The woman wasn't screaming any more. She was singing. Something about, *I loved you fair, I loved you well.*

It was a sort of sad song. Very faint. And sort of broken. All of those hours down under the ground in that box must have made her crazy. All she needed was some air and food and she'd be all right. But she just kept singing, not wanting to scream any more, not caring, just singing.

I listened to the song. And then I turned and walked straight across the bombed site and up the steps to our house and I opened the front door.

" Father," I said.

" So there you are! " he cried.

" Father," I said.

" You're going to get a good hiding," he said.

" She's not screaming any more."

" Don't talk about her! "

" She's singing now," I cried.

" You're not telling the truth! "

" Dad," I said, " she's out there and she'll be dead soon if you don't listen to me. She's out there, singing, and this is what she's singing." I hummed the tune. I sang a few of the words—" *I loved you fair, I loved you well . . .* "

Dad's face grew pale. He came and took my arm.

" What did you say? " he said.

I sang it again, "*I loved you fair, I loved you well.*"

" Where did you hear that song? " he shouted.

" Out in the bombed site, just now."

" But that's Helen's song, the one she wrote, years ago for *me*! " cried Father. " You can't know it. Nobody knew it, except Helen and me. I never sang it to anyone, not to you or anyone."

" That's right," I said.

" Oh, my God! " cried Father, and ran out of the door to get a spade.

The last I saw of him he was on the bombed site, digging, and lots of other people with him, digging. I felt so happy I wanted to cry.

I dialled a number on the phone and when Dippy answered I said, " Hullo, Dippy. Everything's fine. Everything's all right. The Screaming Woman isn't screaming any more."

" Great," said Dippy.

" I'll meet you on the bombed site with a spade in two minutes," I said.

" Last one there's a monkey! So long! " cried Dippy.

" So long, Dippy! " I said, and ran.

To which of the men did she belong ?

BUSHMANSHIP

BY EDWARD LINDALL

TWENTY, maybe thirty, miles across the arid spinifex plain there was a smoke. Or so Fat Nose Charlie said, at the camp's edge, shading his black eyes with a verandah of hand against the early morning sun. Petney couldn't see it, but he believed his guide and felt sudden inward quiverings of excitement. Charlie the Aranda was unimpressive in soiled khaki pants and shirt, but he saw things on the ground and in the air that seldom were disclosed to white men from the city.

" Dey answer our smoke," Charlie said. " More better we go out now meet them."

Dr. Nelson Petney, neat and dark and serious, nodded eagerly, betrayed out of his normal scientific calm. " Let's go."

" Just you an' me, boss." Charlie shook his head towards the others. " Plenty shy feller dis one."

" Don't I know it," Petney said, grinning now in his eagerness. " Two weeks we've been making smoke all over. Two weeks they've kept away."

" We go little bit way in Rover," Charlie said. " Then foot-walk so they not scared off." He scuffed bare, calloused toes in the cool red sand, watching them, but keeping Petney in his side vision. " Everyting be orright here, boss."

" Of course," Petney said, but his grey eyes became a trifle guarded, his wide, pleasant mouth a little stiff. He was not specially pleased that Charlie should have seen into his secret worry; he had thought that it was outwardly controlled.

He looked then, with an affected casualness, about their little overnight camp. There were the three Land-Rovers, grimed and scratched and somewhat battered, standing head to tail like circus elephants. There was squat, grizzled Dutchy Zerna packing his cooking-gear, having cleaned it with scourings of dry sand. And there was Harvey Lever rolling Alison's sleeping-bag while she lounged on the front seat of a Rover, jeaned legs

dangling, enjoying her first cigarette of the day and exchanging eye-talk with the man kneeling symbolically, if usefully, at her feet.

Her short dark hair was dull now because they carried only enough water for drinking and the barest hygiene. She wore only basic make-up to guard against wind and sand and sun—although it was officially winter the plain was harsh and dry. But the fine bone structure of her oval face, the deep luminosity of her eyes, her innate grace of movement kept her beautiful.

Petney knew, as Charlie had said, that everything in the camp would be "orright." Zerna would be there to make a third.

"We go now," Charlie said again, his guttural voice insistent. "Dese feller mebbe change dere mind. Go way."

Petney turned and moved towards the leading Land-Rover in which he travelled with Charlie. "Dutchy," he called, talking pointedly and yet unwillingly past Harvey Lever. "Charlie and I are going up a few miles to investigate some smoke."

"Pintubis?" Harvey Lever asked quickly. He was a thin, tall man, thirtyish; a man of restless energy, dark-eyed and on the borderline of handsome. He was the party's artist and photographer.

Petney nodded. "Who else out here? But it might be hunting-fires. You know, burning the spinifex to drive out lizards and snakes . . . But Charlie thinks it's an answering signal."

He turned slightly, looking again at Dutchy Zerna, who had tramped and ridden around Australia's northern wilderness for forty years. "Dutchy," he said. "All of you. Stay here until we send up a smoke to come forward. Pick up our Rover on the way. We're walking the last few miles . . . And Harvey." He knew he had to say this because Harvey Lever was, in all things, precipitate. "No camera. No drawings. We have to make friends first."

Zerna grinned right across his square, lined face, screwing his blue eyes into periwinkle dots. "Good luck, Doc." He chuckled. "Don't be hurt if they go for run away. Maybe you'll be the first white man they ever seen."

"They'll love him," Alison said, smiling coolly behind her cigarette. "Everyone loves Nelson. Don't they Nelson?"

Petney felt the taunt but chose, as usual, to pass it off. "Maybe they'll have an ethnologist like me, wanting to discover how the primitive white man lives."

Alison, he noticed, smiled across at Harvey Lever in what appeared a mock amusement at his joke. He felt a sharp spurt

of displeasure at their sharing. He was faintly puzzled by it. In the last of his five years of marriage to Alison he had grown accustomed to her flirtations, which had become a byword, he knew, in their university social circle back in Sydney.

Accustomed? He weighed the word now, climbing behind the wheel of the Rover, with Charlie grunting as he snugged down some of the gear in the back. Accustomed, yes, the way a man of open mind, a civilised, sophisticated mind, learns to live with something of which he does not approve but knows he cannot, in liberal conscience, ban.

Her infidelities had been slight, or so he believed, but they had the power to hurt, to inflict a nagging misery. Nevertheless, he had ignored them outwardly, retreating behind the carapace of academic life, holding to a principle of civilised behaviour. Marriage was a partnership, he had always held, with both partners equal, and one did not coerce, forbid, or seek in any way to govern the actions of the other. At forty, he was nearly ten years her senior. And that, too, was a reason why he should preserve a balance.

So it was strange to find this sharpness, almost of jealousy, reacting in him now. The feeling, the exacerbation, had been growing steadily ever since they had left Alice Springs three weeks ago, growing more frequent, too, as they had pushed into the back country. Now they had been roaming the arid Pintubi hunting-grounds two weeks, only two days from the end of their supplies, and the feeling was becoming an obsession. It was probably, he thought, something to do with the new intimacy of all their lives—a simplification of mind; man being driven back upon himself by the immensity, the implacability, of his surroundings. A return, in part, to primitivism.

"This be just one man and two, tree wives, some children," Charlie said, scratching the big fleshy nose for which he was named. "No more."

Petney kept his eyes on the ground ahead, twisting the Rover around the bigger spinifex bushes, crushing the small ones, but always heading towards the point where the smoke had shown. "How d'you know?"

"You see," Charlie grunted. "One man."

Petney permitted a small, wry smile to touch his wide-lipped mouth, and there was a suspicion of it in his grey eyes. Fat Nose Charlie was part empirical wizard and part confidence man, and Petney knew it well. He had observed the combination in other guides, in various parts of the country, on other expeditions. Charlie was fond of clothing perfectly normal information in

wraiths of mystery to boost his reputation as a bushman and to impress his employer. Petney had caught him at it several times. Now he was suggesting that he had some inner knowledge gained from the Pintubi smoke, or from some infinitesimal sign. But Petney knew it for an informed guess. He could have done the same himself.

The Pintubis lived in small family groups, they always had—the country was so poor in food and water that it could not sustain larger concentrations. Only in the odd bountiful season did they forgather for ritual dances and ceremonials. At other times, such as these, the families spread wide over the several hundred square miles of the spinifex plain, catching their lizards and guanas, their occasional birds, camping near little soaks of muddy water, often going foodless and waterless for days. They lived there because the land was circled by deserts which could not be crossed on foot; as a consequence, they were among the most primitive people on earth, left behind as the world went forward. Stone Age men. And, to a scientist, an ethnologist, among the most valuable human beings in existence.

"We stop here," Charlie said presently. "Now we go foot-walk. Maybe we meet dis feller. We see."

"But we haven't covered half the distance," Petney protested. "We'll walk for miles."

Charlie climbed out, shaking his khaki pants, slapping his khaki shirt, as though wanting to look his best for the coming meeting. "Dis feller never seen Land-Rover before mebbe," he said. "Run clear to hell if'n he sees it moving. An' we don't walk too much orright. Dis feller leave women hiding. He fast as Rover in dis country. He pretty close up front dere right now."

"We'll take some food," Petney said. "Canned meat." He hesitated. "Think we should take a gun?"

"No gun," Charlie said with a sharp, emphatic shake of the head. "Mebbe he's seen gun sometime. Mebbe someone tole him 'bout dem. You want see 'im, we go dis way. Better even we go nekkid." He grinned. "But you white feller scare 'im like spirit walkabout."

So they went forward through the ragged, spiky, knee-high spinifex, with cans of gift meat in their shirts, with the new sun warming them, feet soundless in the red sand, their eyes questing endlessly, and Petney's heart beating faster with the excitement of stepping forward into the past . . .

They had walked for the better part of an hour, Charlie slightly in the lead, when Petney found his mind weaving back to

Alison. He could see her plainly, now that exercise was tempering his excitement, smiling down at Harvey Lever, throwing her taunting glances, her bitter-sweet remarks, at the husband who parried them so expertly, the expertise of practice, and felt, without showing it, the little abrasive hurts that scraped the senses.

He hadn't wanted to bring her on this expedition, but she had insisted. So he had brought her, paying expenses which he could ill afford because the American foundation's grant did not extend to passengers. And it had been fine at first, travelling with their vehicles on the train, almost like the early years of their marriage when they had lived for each other, laughed and been serious together, loved together. Until they had joined up with Harvey Lever at the railhead of Alice Springs, and straight away the maddening flirtation had begun.

Alison had announced on the eve of setting out that she would ride with Harvey Lever in the second Land-Rover, although Petney had assigned her to the rear with Dutchy Zerna. He had Fat Nose Charlie in the lead one with him; the rear seats of all of them were filled with stores. He had wanted to object to her travelling with Lever, but had let it go, wanting to demonstrate his unconcern, fearful that any objection would be attributed to jealousy . . .

"Pintubi close now," Charlie said, in an off-hand, conversational tone. "You not look around. We just keep foot-walk. He come when good an' ready."

Despite the warning, Petney could not help one swift glance around, "You've seen him . . . them?"

"Seen just as good," Charlie said. "I seen only place he could come look at us. Little dry water gutter over dere . . . doan look. Dis feller sneak along, den crawl out here in spinifex, see what we like."

There was a helplessness about the situation that Petney found intolerable. He didn't even marvel at Charlie's new-found frankness. "Can't we do something?" His voice was brittle with its tension.

"Nuttin'," Charlie said softly. "We just keep walkin'. He like wild geese. You know, dey curious . . . Mebbe he hungry, mebbe he lonely. I dunno. Mebbe he come out, and mebbe he just crawl away."

They kept on walking, five minutes more, making towards the dry watercourse, Charlie with his rolling glide and Petney walking on his nerves. Then out of the silence the air whispered,

and swish—a spear streaked past them on the right, to stab the ground ten feet ahead, stand up a moment, and then fall softly into the spinifex.

"He friend," Charlie said quickly, raising a warning hand. "Now just turn around. Slow. Like you friend."

And Petney turned with Charlie, calming the beating pulses, the tumult of excitement, the quick ice flow of fear. A tall, thin, bearded black man, naked but for a small and inadequate loin string of plaited grass, stood not twenty feet away, perfectly still but with somehow a sense of movement in his body. In his left hand he carried a bundle of spears, points foremost, which Petney knew for the universal sign of peace. They could not be whipped up swiftly and thrown by the right hand in that position.

"Charlie," he said quietly. "We get this man on tape and take the photographs we want, I'm going to raise your pay."

The Pintubi came forward then, seeming to ignore the spiky spinifex, to walk through or over it, making a straight line, walking with a wonderful grace, shoulders and head back. Petney was aware of admiration for the superb dignity of the man. His body was so steady, his head so still, that he could have been balancing a crown.

And in that instant, subtly, Petney was conscious of a change in his basic attitude. There, on that barren plain, with his doctorate of philosophy, his clothes and boots, his wristwatch, and beyond him the marvels of tape recorders, cameras, and vehicles, he lost all feeling of superiority.

He stood erect and silent, smiling, as the Pintubi halted a spear's length away.

Charlie started talking then, slowly because he was not practised in the Pintubi tongue, using his hands in the age-old nomadic sign language to fill in the gaps and explain his words. And the Pintubi answered in a coarse, husky voice, with a strange, singsong rhythm, grinning with perfect teeth in the black, tangled thicket of his beard; he stood on his right leg, with the left foot tucked behind the knee, a rest stance that Petney recognised as common with other natives throughout a thousand-mile arc of the northern part of the continent.

"His name Jatjanda," Charlie said. "He got two wives, four kids like I reckon. Dey back near big sandhill."

He waved and pointed towards a fluted sand ridge some two miles away.

Petney took a can of meat from inside his shirt and opened it with a key. He handed it to the Pintubi, moving forward quietly, and when the Pintubi looked at it without moving, he

broke off some of the protruding meat with his fingers and ate it. Then the Pintubi took it and ate too, digging in with two fingers until he reached the lip of tin, bit it tentatively and looked up puzzled until Charlie explained what part you ate and what part you threw away.

"Tell him about the Land-Rovers," Petney said. "Tell him they'll be here soon, so he won't be scared. Tell him we'll bring them up with all our food and make camp with him. Tell him we've got our own water."

"He seen white feller before," Charlie said. "I tink prospector, sometime long ago, but he stay hid. Dis time he see me, proper black feller, and know everyting orright."

That night the Pintubi family, timidity allayed by their man's assurances and the white folks' friendliness, cooked and ate their day's catch of lizards and then polished off seven cans of meat. They ate sweet biscuits, too, sparingly at first, then eagerly when the taste had been acquired. And after, while Jatjanda sat cross-legged, talking, the women and children built a foot-high windbreak of spinifex, and made eight little fires with rubbing sticks, each with its own small pile of wood. They would sleep, in their normal nakedness, between these throughout the cut-wind night, turning in their sleep to replenish the fires as they burnt low, their minds and bodies sunk below the level of coldness by some strange, acquired temperature control.

Petney felt almost ashamed of the warmth of his sleeping-bag. Just before he went to sleep, he had a picture of Jatjanda's smiling wives, bringing him food, sitting quietly behind him until a flick of the hand sent them to prepare the windbreak and the sleeping-fires, perfectly content to play their parts, with a dignity all their own. What a contrast with Alison, he thought. Alison who had handed her dirty plates to Dutchy Zerna to be cleaned, who had waved at Harvey Lever to have her sleeping bag unloaded and unrolled . . . He had a ludicrous dream about her in a string loin cloth, doing simple chores, waiting for permission to speak, walking and sitting behind him, patiently, accepting her position . . . Happy. He woke with a wry, bitter smile upon his lips.

After breakfast had been eaten, with Dutchy Zerna dishing out flapjacks and beef rissoles to the Pintubi as well as to his own tribe, Petney and Fat Nose Charlie got down to work. The tape recorder needed a little explanation, but Petney was careful not to demonstrate it lest the disembodied spirit voices it contained put his new friends to flight.

He warned Harvey Lever not to show them photographs; experience with other primitives had taught him that they, too, were spirit visions—shrunken and flattened people somehow fixed to magic wood.

For lunch Dutchy Zerna again provided all the food, for the Pintubis had not been out to hunt. He provided the precious water, too, and Jatjanda this time expressed his admiration of their stoppered cans; his women had nothing but hollowed pieces of wood. For knives they used flint chippings. Petney presented him with two knives and an empty can in solemn ceremony, and Jatjanda, inclining his head in dignified acceptance, gestured his women to take the gifts away.

"Charlie," Petney said. "Tell him we have to go tomorrow, but we want to come back and talk with other Pintubi families. Ask him if he'll meet us somewhere and guide us in. Tell him we'll bring plenty food."

Jatjanda smiled and swept a long, thin arm to encompass his featureless domain. He shook his head, too, and spoke seriously. He finished with a flashing smile.

"He say orright," Charlie translated. "He meet us, take us walkabout, meet real shy feller Pintubis. But no food. He say plenty good tucker here for black feller. He got his own."

Petney nodded agreement, not surprised at the man's independence. He had pride. And they settled down on the ground to the afternoon's recording session, in which Jatjanda explained the details of his daily life, his hunting techniques, how his women cooked and dug for water, how they all paid obeisance to their spirit gods, how they maintained order among themselves and peace with other nomad families through a detailed set of rules.

Around them, as they talked, Harvey Lever used his camera and his pencils, on Jatjanda, on the women, on the children, picturing them from many angles, following the women to their water soak, recording the children's hunting games that weren't really games but training exercises. Alison went everywhere with him, helping with sure touch to overcome the women's shyness, entering with a surprising tomboy flair into the children's games. She also lit Harvey's cigarettes, fetched and carried for him.

Petney watched them while the tape rolled on, but only with half his attention for he was now beginning to pick up some of the Pintubi's conversation. Many of the words could be recognised as springing from a common root. There was, also, the one-legged resting stance. The Pintubis, evidently, had not always been alone, cut off by the desert circle. Rather they had

been trapped in solitude by nature, not immured of their own desire.

Suddenly he became aware that Harvey Lever was making a drawing of Alison, who was reclining on one elbow, jeaned legs a-sprawl, just on the fringe of camp. He didn't like it because it meant another link between them. Lever, quite smilingly handsome now, kept showing her his progress and they crouched with heads close together, their bodies touching. But Jatjanda was still speaking, with Charlie spurring him along, and there was little time for observation . . . or even jealousy.

But then Petney noticed that Jatjanda was watching Lever and Alison as he talked, his deep-sunk eyes expressing, somehow, puzzlement. And there were thought wrinkles on his forehead. His hands, suspended from his wide-angled knees, traced patterns in the sand. Finally, when there was no more lore to relate, or none that he could describe to outsiders, he turned his head to watch them frankly. And at that time, with the drawing finished, Alison reached up and kissed Lever on the cheek. A quick little peck of a kiss, but it set Petney's pulses racing, embittering his satisfaction at the completion of the tape.

His city-nurtured sophistication fell away. He felt his face redden and his hands clench. He had to fight the anger down, struggling for the preservation of his civilised open-mindedness, his conviction that choice was a personal decision, that freedom was an integral part of marriage, that happiness could only come from freedom . . . Then he was aware that Jatjanda was speaking to Charlie and, listening, detected words shaped in the puzzlement of the Pintubi's eyes. And Charlie began a hesitant answer, not using any sign talk, glancing covertly at the white man by his side.

Petney leaned forward. " Charlie. What's he saying? What're you telling him? "

" Oh, just nuttin'," Charlie said off-handedly. " Just nuttin' talk."

" You're talking about the missus," Petney insisted, his lips tightening. " Tell me what you say."

" Now, boss," Charlie began. " Dis no stuff for you. Dis stupid feller. Say stupid tings."

" Tell me," Petney said.

Charlie wriggled his buttocks on the sand, curled his bare toes, and scraped a calloused hand around his big fat nose. " Well, boss, he want know whose woman the missus is. He say which white man she belong? "

" Go on," Petney said.

"I tole him you. An' he say whyn't you beat her wid stick. Make her be like wife." He dropped his eyes then. "Sorry, boss," he muttered. "I doan want to tell you. He proper cheeky feller."

"Tell him," Petney said. "That white woman has rights equal to white man."

Jatjanda nodded solemnly as he listened to Charlie, black eyes fixed on Petney, and Petney saw in them an expression of contempt.

The Pintubi spoke briefly.

Charlie coughed slightly. Embarrassedly. "He say Pintubi woman got rights, too. But Pintubi proper husband. Pintubi woman proper wife. Make everybody happy."

Dr. Nelson Petney got up then, grey eyes blank, and walked back along the line of Land-Rovers, to where Dutchy Zerna was servicing a motor, past him and out on to the plain for several hundred yards. There went with him the dream he had had that night of Alison doing simple chores and, overlaying it, a picture of the Pintubi women doing them too, tending their husband, paying him the respect he demanded, enjoying their own rights, and living, for all their hardships, in evident happiness. And he realised it was not, for all its difference of locale and degree, so much unlike his earlier life with Alison.

He wondered then how and when their marriage had begun its downward slide. He didn't know. It was not the sort of thing you could trace by divisions, like tree growth rings, or soil and rock deposits. However, it had occurred to him at times—and did again—that her flirtations of the past year could well have sprung from discontent. But hell, he thought now, what could you do about discontent more than he had done? He hadn't upbraided her, even when she had been most negligent, he hadn't watchdogged her at parties but let her go her own way unhindered, he hadn't insisted, even, that she should sleep with him, or attempted to coerce her in times of disaffection. She had had complete freedom . . .

And then Jatjanda's gravel tones came again, expressing disapproval of the white woman's elastic freedom. Petney turned back to the camp, his mouth firm with a new-cast resolution.

That night they had a medium-sized farewell feast, brewing the last of their coffee which the Pintubis wouldn't drink, smoking cigarettes which they didn't understand, but finally unearthing a tin of toffees that they thought must have come from some white man's heaven.

And Petney took Alison sternly by the arm and led her to her sleeping-bag when the talk ran out. "Unroll it and get a good night's rest," he said, and kissed her firmly, ignoring the surprise that gave her face an open-flower look. He dragged his own bag next to hers and slipped inside the blankets.

In the morning, with breakfast over, he said, "Alison, give Dutchy a hand with the dishes, will you? Then help him pack."

She looked at him with refusal on her lips, but he stared her down and she shrugged and began to work.

They said good-bye to Jatjanda, his wives and children, with the sun climbing redly through the mist banks of the horizon, and Alison began to walk off with Harvey Lever. Petney was following when he caught Jatjanda's gaze. Censorious, almost hypnotic.

"Alison," he said, grabbing her arm. "Ride with Dutchy, will you?"

"What?" she demanded, dark eyes wide as she turned, amazement on her soft, full lips. "In all the dust?"

"In all the dust," he said.

"I'm riding with Harvey."

Her eyes dared him, but he thought, with a new-found prescience, that he saw in them a gleam of expectancy. "You won't ride anywhere with Harvey," he said evenly. "You'll ride with Dutchy, with all the cooking things."

"Like a native wife?" she said.

Petney nodded. "There are worse alternatives." He paused, calm, but with a deliberate strength showing plainly on his face. "I've learnt a lot from the Pintubis."

She looked at him levelly, rebelliously, for a long moment. Then a tinge of colour stained her cheeks. "I think maybe you have," she said quietly. "All right. I'll go with Dutchy."

He watched her walk lissomly away, swing back to the Pintubi wives and shake their hands, ruffle the children's dirt-matted hair. Then she climbed in alongside Dutchy Zerna. He saw Lever open his mouth to say something, waited for it hopefully, but Lever changed his mind. Petney stepped into his driver's seat with Charlie beside him, and threw Jatjanda a final wave. The Pintubi raised his right hand palm outwards, standing like a statue before his family. A figurehead. The women, ranged behind him, smiled. The children laughed and waved.

And Dr. Nelson Petney felt his happiest for a long time. There were many facets, he reflected, to the science of ethnology. But there was one that he would not be discussing in his report to the home foundation.

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Country Scene

It is not merely a breach of etiquette for a girl to take a country walk alone, it is absolutely unseemly and dangerous. There is always a chance of meeting tramps or drunken men . . . *The Girls' Own Paper*, 1882

. . . Carefree

She was wearing the coral taffeta trousers
Someone had brought her from Ispahan,
And the little gold coat with pomegranate blossoms,
And the coral-hafted feather fan ;
But she ran down a Kentish lane in the moonlight,
And skipped in the pool of the moon as she ran.

She cared not a rap for all the big planets,
For Betelgeuse or Aldebaran,
And all the big planets cared nothing for her,
That small impertinent charlatan ;
But she climbed on a Kentish stile in the moonlight,
And laughed at the sky through the sticks of her fan.

VICTORIA SACKVILLE-WEST, *Full Moon*

Hide and Seek

We made an excursion to Les Echets—Mamma, Mlle. Brisseau, with her fiancé M. Favier; Madame Arrigoni and her husband; Charles and I.

We came to a little wood, and Mamma settled herself in the shade. The Italian woman suggested that the rest of us should play hide and seek. We drew lots and I was " It." I had to hide my head in Mamma's bosom while the others scattered into the

wood. If I find that Italian creature with Charles, I thought, I shall hit her.

But I didn't. What happened still makes me giggle. I started off, moving silently through the wood, peering and listening . . . soon something light-coloured in the heart of a dark copse caught my eye. It was the Arrigoni's shawl . . . there was a man with her, but I could not see who he was. . . . I parted the leaves and peeped through the opening.

It *was* the husband! I wanted to shout for joy.

In vain I hunted for my lover. He was so well hidden that finally he caught me, as I passed near his hiding-place. With the laughing mastery of a satyr, he seized the helpless nymph . . .

We all walked home with great decorum.

JEANNE AURELIE GRIVOLIN, *Breviary of Love*

Cloud-drifts

Here the young lover, on his elbow raised,
Looked at his happy girl with grass surrounded,
And flicked the spotted beetle from her wrist:
She, with her head thrown back, at heaven gazed,
At Suffolk clouds, serene and slow and mounded;
Then calmly smiled at him before they kissed.

FRANCES CORNFORD, *The Corner of the Field*

All Set?

Now she knew that Stan wanted to be alone with her as much as she wanted to be alone with him. Carrying their paper plates of food, they walked through the carpet of wood sorrel that grew along the bank of the stream and found two rocks near the trickle of water. It was a perfect spot to be with Stan. There was even a full moon rising through the bay trees. Jane sat down on her rock with a sigh of pleasure. It was a beautiful, romantic moonlit night. Perhaps after Stan had eaten his steak he would turn to her and look deep into her eyes . . .

Here goes, thought Jane, and sawed at her steak with her cafeteria knife. Nothing happened to the steak, but the pressure of the knife bent the paper plate. Gingerly she tried another side of the steak. This time she succeeded in separating a morsel of meat, which she put into her mouth. That was her mistake. She chewed and chewed and chewed . . . she didn't care. She was alone with Stan. Alone and chewing . . .

BEVERLY CLEARY, *Fifteen*

Trembly Avowal

Let us now bask under the spreading trees said Bernard.

Oh yes lets said Ethel and she opened her dainty parasole and sank down upon the long green grass. She closed her eyes but she was far from asleep. Bernard sat beside her in profound silence gazing at her pink face and long wavy eye lashes. He puffed at his pipe for some moments while the larks gaily caroled in the blue sky. Then he edged a trifle closer to Ethels form.

Ethel he murmured in a trembly voice.

Oh what is it said Ethel hastily sitting up.

Words fail me ejaculated Bernard horsly my passion for you is intense he added fervently. It has grown day and night since I first beheld you.

Oh said Ethel in surprise I am not prepared for this.

DAISY ASHFORD, *The Young Visiters*

A kiss on a dawn hill, a startled cry
Of jays, and somewhere in the brambles deep
A rabbit moves; no more the lonely sky
Flies from the day-spring that disturbs her sleep.
A glance that speaks for lips, and in your hair
The sun's first fingers pick out autumn hues.
The year's yet young, and on the Maying air
The homeless cuckoo his long love renews.
Splendid as grass in summer we two stand
Amongst the bracken where the fieldmouse stirs
Angry at this rough waking; hand-in-hand
Wander away between the watching firs.

SIMON GROVE, *A Kiss on a Dawn Hill*

Last Scene

Miss Tweedletop and I . . . had walked slowly forward for some time, and had been idly talking of this and that, when suddenly I saw, only a little way in front, a most curious group, a herd of the most unlikely creatures. They were of various sizes, but the largest would be easily twice the size of a full-grown elephant . . . I think that even an elephant hunter might have felt diffident about approaching such creatures, who looked as if they had strayed out of the early chapters of the *Outline of History*. Miss Tweedletop, however, walked on even after she had noticed the astonishing brutes we were gradually approaching.

" Ah," she exclaimed, but rather slowly, like one who makes small talk, " There are the Berkshire Beasts . . ."

J. B. PRIESTLEY, *All About Ourselves*

So damned simple, that was the beauty of it

NOBODY CAN ASK THAT

BY F. AND R. LOCKRIDGE

IT HAD been the easiest case in Captain Heimrich's very considerable experience. Five hours ago—five hours and a few minutes, at the most—a man had been beaten to death where a drive joined a narrow asphalt road in the town of Van Brunt, County of Putnam, State of New York.

The man who had killed sat across a desk from Captain Heimrich and did not deny his guilt. The man's thin and sensitive face was tormented, and his eyes were blank, but he did not deny he had killed Robert Ashton, a man in his middle thirties, who had spent the previous afternoon on a golf course.

The previous afternoon had been surprisingly warm for mid-spring. Now, at a little before one on Monday morning, it was still surprisingly warm—unseasonably warm. A window of the second floor office in the Town House, which Heimrich had borrowed, was partially open, and the air which came through it was almost like summer air. This uncharacteristically pleasant weather was one of several things which Malcolm Burns, retired cartoonist, had not counted on. For one reason and another, Captain Heimrich of the New York State Police was rather sorry for Burns, although Heimrich knew of no excuse for murder.

" I admit killing him," Burns said, and his voice was steady—painfully steady. " What more do you want? "

A statement was wanted. A statement is always wanted. It would be taken down, transcribed, and Mr. Burns would be asked to sign it. The third man in the room was a police stenographer. Mr. Burns was aware of that.

" I killed him," Burns said. " I beat him over the head with this." He touched the heavy cane which rested against the chair he sat in. " I said, ' Walked down to meet you, old man,' and he said something—I don't remember what—and started up the

drive ahead of me. I hit him hard. Then I hit him a couple more times to make sure. That's a statement. I'll sign that."

Momentarily, Captain Heimrich closed the bright blue eyes set wide in a square face. He said, somewhat sadly, "Now, Mr. Burns," and added that they needed more than that. Then he said, "Because you thought he was in love with your wife?"

"Does Lydia know yet?" Malcolm Burns asked. "Has somebody told her?"

"Yes," Heimrich said. "Somebody's driving her up from town."

Burns nodded, to show he had heard. Then he said, "I'd known he was in love with her for quite some time. She's—she's easy to fall in love with. But—" He stopped. His face worked. "She was beginning to fall in love with him," he said. "She didn't know it herself but I could hear it in her voice. When she spoke of him."

"Only that?" Heimrich said.

"I know Lyddie," Burns said. "Don't you think I know her? Her voice—she can't hide things in her voice. She's not that kind. And . . ." Again he stopped. Heimrich waited. "She's the straightest thing in the world," Burns said, and spoke very slowly, in a very steady voice. "When—when she realised she loved him, she'd come to me and tell me. And she'd go away. Get a divorce and . . ." Once more he stopped.

"She was all I had left," he said, and spoke as if everything were dead around him. "What more?"

"Start from the beginning," Heimrich said, "start with Saturday. You'd arranged for your wife to go to New York to see her mother. You agreed to call Ashton and tell him the usual Sunday evening supper was off. You didn't call him. You gave your housekeeper Sunday off."

"She's always off on Sunday," Burns said. "Most of them are, around here. She made a casserole to go into the oven for Sunday supper. I'd been out walking—walking up and down the drive—and came up to the house just as she was leaving. She told me where the casserole was and that she'd remembered to wind the clock and set it."

"She told you that she had set the clock?"

"It runs slow," Burns said. "Every Saturday she winds it and sets it. Every Saturday she tells us she has."

"Go on," Heimrich said. "On Sunday? Before you went down the drive to meet Mr. Ashton?"

Burns did not see what difference it made now. But if Heimrich

did, he had waited until it was time. He had had breakfast. He had simply sat there and played some records. And he had been lonely. Was that a satisfaction to Heimrich? He had been lonely. But all he had done was to wait until it was time. Everything else had been done.

Heimrich said he had arranged for his wife to go to New York. That was not true; was not, at any rate simply true. She had had her mother on her mind; had said often that she ought—really ought—to go and spend a day with her. "I encouraged her," Burns said. "That was all. Suggested she go some Saturday afternoon, stay until Monday. She picked last Saturday. But one weekend would have been as good as another. He came every Sunday, or almost. Had for, oh, about a year."

The even voice faltered, momentarily. Heimrich waited.

Burns had cooked his lunch. Then he had gone out on to the terrace and sat in the sun—faced the afternoon sun. From the terrace one could. He interrupted himself. "You've seen it."

Heimrich had seen it. He had driven up the narrow, turning drive, bordered close by tall evergreens. He had come out into the clearing where the Burns house hugged its hilltop. He had seen the terrace which was to the west of the house. From the terrace, one could look far across the Hudson; could look along a wide vista cut through trees; could see the river far below and the hills beyond. The sun had just set behind the Palisades when Heimrich went to the house, and the sky flamed there.

"We cut the trees," Burns said, as if Heimrich had spoken. "Mostly by ourselves, Lyddie and I. So that we could sit on the terrace and look across the river. That was one reason we built there. So that . . ."

He stopped. He said Heimrich couldn't, he supposed, be less interested. He said he had sat on the terrace, in the sun. It was nobody's business what he had thought about. After a time he had gone in and changed into dark clothes. After that, he had made himself a drink. "One drink," he said. "I was getting a little jumpy." He had turned on the record player again, at low volume, and listened to music and waited. He found that time passed very slowly. "You'd think it wouldn't," he said. "But it did."

The clock struck, and he counted its striking. It struck six, and he went back to his chair and waited, listening to the soft music. He found that the music, instead of soothing, became a torment. "We listened to music a good deal, Lyddie and I," he said. "Especially the last couple of years." He turned the player off and sat, waiting. The clock struck the half hour, and

then he got up and went around the house turning on lights

"People can see the house from the road," Burns said. "At a certain point. I didn't want him to see it dark and think the plans were changed."

He put the casserole in the oven, then. He got his cane and sat in a chair near the door. The time passed so slowly that he had a sudden conviction the clock had stopped, and made himself listen intently and heard the clock ticking.

"It's amazing what you can hear if you try," he said. "Too much, sometimes. A note in a voice and . . ." He did not finish. He said, across the desk to Heimrich, "What use is this to you?"

"Go on," Heimrich said. "We like to get things clear . . ."

Finally, Burns went on, the clock struck seven. He waited until it struck the half hour, and then a few minutes more. Ashton was due at a quarter to eight. He did not want to have to wait down there too long. But he wanted to be in good time.

"You didn't think of the Knights?" Heimrich asked him.

"Sure I thought of them," Burns said. "I'm not a fool, Captain. I had the whole thing worked out. They'd be inside, with the lights on. You look out of a lighted room into the dark, and what do you see? Not a thing. Not even through that big window of theirs."

"That's true, naturally," Heimrich said, and remembered the wide picture-window of John Knight's house—and the house itself not far back from the asphalt road, opposite the entrance of the Burns' drive. He remembered the terrace which ran along. the front of the Knights' house, and the terrace furniture thg Knights had got out early this season, because it had turned so unusually warm. "You thought it would be blamed on these hoodlums who've been going around?"

"Why not?" Burns said. "It wouldn't be the first time young gangsters have killed a man. But I told you—I didn't care who you pinned it on. Or tried to pin it on. That was the beauty of it. It was so damned simple. Where would you have started? What would you have had to go on?"

"All right," Heimrich said. "Go ahead."

Burns had walked down the drive which was like a tunnel, walled and topped by trees. At the foot of the drive he had had to wait only a few minutes, and then he heard Ashton's familiar steps on the road. "He always," Burns said, "walked as if he owned the earth." He greeted Ashton and was greeted in return. Ashton started up the drive, and Burns brought the heavy cane up and down again.

He felt the shock of the impact through the cane and then, in the same instant, the— it was a kind of give, as Ashton's skull was broken. He stooped over Ashton, lying on the gravelled drive, and made sure. But to make more than sure he struck again—struck twice, flailing downward with the cane. Then he walked back up the drive to his house, and when he got there, washed the cane off under a tap in the kitchen and dried it with tissue and flushed the paper down a toilet.

"You didn't hear anything?" Heimrich asked him.

"A man shouting," Burns said. "Oh—I know. But Knight is always yelling at that dog of his."

He waited a few minutes more, and then telephoned to Ashton's house, and asked the housekeeper whether Ashton was on his way—said Ashton was late, and that it wasn't like him to be late. He was told that Ashton had left some time before.

He had planned that, after waiting a little, he would walk down the drive and find the body. But—

"Ten or fifteen minutes and you came," Burns said to Heimrich, and his face worked and it was evidently an effort to keep his voice steady. "You must have been close by."

"At the Old Stone Inn," Heimrich said. "They got me there a few minutes after Mr. Knight called and said what he had seen—what they'd all seen—from the terrace."

"I had quite an audience," Malcolm Burns said, and now he made no effort to keep the bitterness of defeat out of his voice. "The Knights and their guests. Any other—"

"Yes," Heimrich said. "Any other day than the last Sunday in April. The day we start daylight saving. So that when the clock struck seven, it was only six by what people call sun time. And the sun was well up—didn't set for almost an hour. It was still bright day when you killed him at a quarter to eight." He paused and looked at the twisting features of the man across from him and at the still, blank eyes. "Your housekeeper," Captain Heimrich said, "told you she had set the clock."

"I explained about—" Burns began, and then spread his hands hopelessly. His face, with that gesture, seemed somehow to fall apart. He began groping for his cane like an old, blind man. But he was not old. He was not over forty.

"She was my eyes," he said, and spoke in a low, dazed voice. "If she went away . . ." He did not, he could not, immediately finish. His groping fingers found the heavy cane. "You can't ask a man to lose his eyes twice," Burns said. "Nobody can ask that."

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THE MAN WHO HATED BANKS

BY MICHAEL GILBERT

DETECTIVE INSPECTOR PATRICK PETRELLA had a feeling that he'd outsmarted himself. Back at New Scotland Yard, his C 12 Department was progressing slowly but surely. The bank robberies had to be stopped. They could even pinpoint the gang involved—but the master mind still eluded them.

Petrella knew he could count on his friend and colleague, Detective Wilmot to keep close watch on Jerry Light's London construction company. Then the C 12 secretary, Jane Orfrey had taken a typing job with Constantia Velden so that an eagle eye could be kept on Constantia's brother, Douglas Marchant. There was something odd about Marchant all right. And where was his co-director, the elusive Alwyn Corder?

Now, as a result of this trip to Dortmund, Petrella was certain the Baron von der Hulde was supplying Light's crowd with high speed drills. No English drill could cut through four walls to snatch a bankroll. Yes, the Baron was in on it up to his neck. Otherwise, Petrella knew the Baron's men would not be tailing him. The car was reversing now and coming for him . . .

When he's been over me once, thought Petrella, he'll come back again just to make sure. Petrella's legs were like sacks of sand but he still had the use of his arms. Pressing on the pavement, he rolled himself over, and then over again until

he was pressed hard against the bottom of the wooden fence.

It was no use. The car was on him now. The near-side wheels were going over him . . . Petrella heaved wildly, felt the skirting board at the foot of the fence bend, and heaved again. There was a dull crack. A complete length of board gave way, and Petrella went rolling, over and over, down a grassy bank to come to rest with a thud at the bottom.

He was on gravel. His groping hand found a wire, and he hauled himself up on to his knees. The fall seemed to have done something for his legs, which were now hurting as much as his chest but seemed to be answering signals again. He crawled forward, pulling himself by the wire.

The fence rocked and splintered as his pursuers, too bulky to squeeze through the space underneath, proceeded to batter it down.

Petrella crawled a little faster.

Behind him, he heard the fence go down with a crack.

There was a circular opening on the left. It looked like a drain. He crawled into it, until a bend in the pipe forced him to stop. Footsteps thundered past. Men were shouting. There was a rumbling, thudding noise, which shook the ground; a hiss of steam, and the clanking of iron on iron.

For the first time, he realised that he was on a railway line. The wire he had been following must have been a signal wire. What he was in now was some sort of rainwater conduit. There was plenty of water coming down it, too.

Further voices, angry voices. Official voices. A dog barking.

Petrella pushed himself backwards until he was out in the open again.

Some way up the line an argument was going on. Orders were being shouted in loud, angry German.

Petrella propped himself against the bank, and started massaging the life back into his sodden legs. A dog passed out of the darkness, and stood watching him.

"Good boy," said Petrella hopefully.

The dog gave a sharp bark, like a sergeant-major calling the parade to attention.

Two men appeared. They were in the green uniform of the railway police. As soon as they saw him, both of them started to shout.

When they seemed to have finished, Petrella said in impeccable German, "Conduct me, at once, if you please, to Inspector Laufer, of the Municipal Police."

Even the dog seemed impressed by this . . .

Constantia Velden was a compulsive talker. She didn't really need a secretary, Jane Orfrey decided. What she needed was a captive audience. And Jane, for two whole days, had been it.

There were advantages, of course. Within an hour, and without any actual effort on her part, she had learnt almost all there was to know about Constantia; about her late husband, who had been an administrative officer in the Air Force, and had died of hepatitic jaundice in 1955; about her brother, Douglas Marchant, a Wing Commander, D.S.O., D.F.C., now the managing director of a firm making window frames, with a London office in Lennox Street; about Constantia's charitable enterprises; about the time Constantia had shaken hands with the Queen; about life; about money.

Money came into most of Mrs. Velden's calculations.

Reading between the lines, Jane had deduced that she had inherited a reasonable competence from her late husband, and that she was helped out, where necessary, by her brother. He advised her on her investments and looked after her tax. He had also produced Alex; and probably paid his salary as well.

Alex was the only other resident at the Loudon Road house, and was chauffeur, butler, gardener, and footman combined. A husky, brown-haired, freckled boy, who looked no more than sixteen and was in fact in his early twenties. He did everything that was beyond the strength or capacity of Mrs. Velden and her cohort of daily women.

What spare time Alex had, he spent polishing his employer's car and tuning up his own motorcycle.

He was out with her now. A lunch-date with brother Douglas, she gathered. Jane munched her way through a solitary meal, and wondered, for the twentieth time, what possible connection her talkative middle-aged employer could have with an organisation which robbed banks. Her faith told her that the connection was there. After forty-eight hours, her reason was beginning to doubt it.

It was three o'clock before the car reappeared in Loudon Road and Alex jumped out and held the door open for Mrs. Velden. Jane caught a glimpse of her, and of the man who followed her out. So Douglas had accompanied his sister home. Interesting.

Then the drawing-room door opened, and he came in, holding it open for his sister and closing it behind her.

He was a man of about six foot, with the round shoulders and barrel chest of a boxer; thick black hair, greying round the edges; a face dominated by a long, straight nose which turned out,

suddenly, at the end, over a bush of grey moustache. Like a down pipe, she thought, emptying into a clump of weeds. A disillusioned pair of eyes peered out from under thick black eyebrows.

"Wing Commander Marchant, Jane Orfrey."

"Plain Douglas Marchant, if you don't mind," said the man. "You're my sister's new secretary. Has she driven you mad yet?"

"Really, Douglas . . ."

"If she hasn't, she will. She gets through secretaries at the rate of two a week. She's a Gorgon. She doesn't realise that the days of indentured labour are over. There are more jobs than secretaries. Girls please themselves nowadays. Isn't that right?"

"More or less," said Jane.

"As soon as you present yourself to an agency, they offer you a dozen jobs, and say, take your pick."

"It isn't quite as easy as that."

"What agency do you use, by the way?"

It came out so swiftly that Jane gaped for a moment. Then she said, "As a matter of fact, I got this job through an advertisement."

"But you must have an agency," said Douglas gently. "You'll never get properly paid if you don't."

"Really, Douglas," said Constantia. "Are you trying to lure her away?"

"I don't see why not. I don't mind betting you underpay her."

"Perhaps she doesn't want to work in an office."

"I think it would be terribly dull," said Jane.

"You wouldn't be dull in my office," said Douglas. "Eighteen pounds a week, and luncheon vouchers."

Jane felt it was time she asserted herself. "If I had to work in an office," she said, "I'd choose a professional office, I think. Not a commercial one."

"There, if I may say so, you display your ignorance," said Douglas. "Professional men overwork their staff and underpay them. They operate on too small a scale to do anything else. We're just the opposite. We've got factories all over England. There's hardly a building goes up that hasn't got one of our windows in it."

"You may be right," said Jane. "But personally I find business men so boring. They think and talk of nothing but money."

"What business men have you worked for?" inquired Douglas politely.

Damn, thought Jane. I walked into that one. Better watch out. He's a lot cleverer than he looks.

"Two or three," she said. And to Constantia, "Should I see if we can raise a cup of tea?"

"Not for me," said Douglas. "I've got to be off. A bit more money-grubbing to do. I'll get Alex to drive me back into Town, if you don't mind."

JANE telephoned Sergeant Wilmot at six o'clock that evening, from a call box on Hampstead Heath. "This is urgent," she said. "See what you can find out about Douglas Marchant. Ex-R.A.F. Runs a business which makes windows. Not widows—windows.

"The firm's got a head office in Lennox Street, and factories all over the place."

"Wasn't he the other director in the firm Light worked for, just after the war?"

"That's right. And he's Mrs. Velden's brother. He gives her money. Any notes she's been passing could easily have come from him."

"I suppose they could have done."

She could hear the doubt in Wilmot's voice, and said urgently, "We're looking for a man who *could* run a show like this. Well, I'm telling you, Douglas Marchant fills the bill. I can't explain it all over the telephone. But he's big enough and bad enough—"

"A big bad wolf," said Wilmot. "O.K. I'll take your word for it. We'll certainly have him checked up."

"Any news from Germany?"

"Not a word," said Wilmot.

As Jane came out of the telephone booth, she heard a motor-cycle start up and move off. When she got back the house was in darkness, and she let herself in with her own key, and went into the drawing-room.

She felt restless, and uneasy, and had no difficulty in putting her finger on the cause of it. The powerful and unpleasant personality of Douglas Marchant seemed to linger in the room, like the smell of a cigar, long after its owner had departed. She realised that it was the first time she had been alone in the house.

Leaving the light on in the drawing-room, she went along to what Constantia called her business-room at the end of the hall. Her objective was Constantia's desk. She found that all the

drawers in it were locked, so was the filing cabinet, and so were the cupboards under the bookcases which lined one wall. The books in the shelves were mostly political and military history, and this surprised her, until it occurred to her that they probably represented the departed Mr. Velden's taste rather than Constantia's.

She took down one of the six volumes of Lloyd George's *War Memoirs*, blew the dust off the top, and opened it.

From an ornate book-plate, the name jumped out at her:

Alwyn Corder

Jane stared at it in blank disbelief. Then she started taking down books at random. The book-plate was in most of them. For a moment she was unable to think straight. She knew that she had stumbled on something desperately important.

A slight sound at the door made her swing round. Alex was smiling at her.

"Looking for something to read?" he said . . .

Sergeant Edwards said to Wilmot, "It's a big company. Superintendent Baldwin says Douglas Marchant is the chairman. Leaves most of the work to his staff, and comes up twice a week from the country to justify his director's fees."

"Anything known?"

"As far as Records know, the company and Marchant are both as clean as the proverbial whistle. What have we got on them?"

"What we've got," said Wilmot, "is a woman's instinct. Jane doesn't like his smell. She thinks he's a crook."

"It doesn't seem a lot to go on," said Edwards doubtfully. "When's Petrella coming back?"

"Baldy hasn't heard a chirrup out of him for twenty-four hours," said Wilmot. "If you ask me, he's found himself a Rhinemaiden."

IT was after midnight when the bedside telephone rang. The red-headed girl, who had been sharing Marchant's flat, and bed, for the past month, groaned and said, "Don't take any notice, Doug. It's probably a wrong number."

"Pass it over," said Douglas, who was lying on his back beside her. He balanced the instrument on his stomach, and unhooked the receiver. As soon as he heard the voice at the other end, he cupped a hand over the receiver and said, "Out you get, honey. It's business."

"This is a nice time to do business."

" Get up and get us both a cup of tea."

Not until the girl had grumbled her way into a dressing-gown and out of the room did Douglas remove his hand from the receiver and say, " Sorry, Alex, there was someone here. It's all right now. Go ahead."

His pyjama top was unbuttoned, showing a chest fuzzed with greying black hair. One of his thick hands held the telephone. The other was fumbling on the bedside table for a cigarette. His face was expressionless.

At the end he said, " Let's just see if I've got this straight. Each of the three evenings she's been there, she's been out about the same time and made a call from a public phone box. And this evening, you found her in the library, snooping through a lot of books which had the old book-plates still in them. Damn, damn, *and damn.*"

There was a long silence as if each was waiting for the other to speak.

Then Douglas said, " If she's what we think she is, and if she's got a regular reporting time, she won't pass any of this on until six o'clock tomorrow night. We ought to do something about it before then, I think."

Alex said, " Yes. I think we ought."

" I can't attend to it myself. I'm flying over to Germany tomorrow afternoon. There's been some sort of trouble at the factory. Could you think of an excuse to take her out in the car?"

Alex said, " Suppose I said you had left some papers at the office which had to be taken to the airport—and you had a message for your sister—something like that."

" It's worth trying," said Douglas.

" When I get her in the car—what then? "

" My dear Alex, I must leave all the arrangements to you. A moonlight picnic, perhaps."

As he rang off, the red-haired girl came back with two cups of tea. Douglas drank his slowly. He didn't seem to want to talk. The red-headed girl thought that Douglas, though a generous spender, was a tiny bit odd; and had been becoming odder just lately. Now, the look in his eyes frightened her. At the age of twenty-five she was something of an expert on men, and she made up her mind, there and then, to clear out while Douglas was in Germany—and not to come back.

When, late on the following afternoon, Alex told Jane that he had to collect some papers and take them to the airport, and that Marchant had asked that she should go too so that he could give her a message for his sister, her first reaction was to say no.

Then she reflected that no harm could really be planned on the crowded roads between Central London and London Airport.

"I'll have to ask Mrs. Velden," she said.

"I've asked her. She says the trip'll do you good."

"When do we start?"

"Right now."

"I'll have to get a coat," said Jane.

She ran up to her room and stood listening. The house was quiet. She tiptoed across the corridor and into Mrs. Velden's bedroom. As she had hoped, there was a bedside telephone extension. She grabbed the receiver, and dialled the code number which she knew by heart.

"Hullo," said Wilmot's voice. "What's up?"

"No time to explain," said Jane. "Alex is taking me, in Mrs. Velden's car, to London Airport. We're calling at the Lennox Street office first. Can you put a tail on?"

"It could be done," said Wilmot. "But why—"

He found himself talking to a dead telephone. Jane had gone.

IT was half past five by the time they reached Lennox Street. Whilst Alex was inside, Jane looked cautiously round to see if Wilmot had been as good as his word. She could see a small green van, apparently delivering parcels at the far end of the road, but nothing else.

By six o'clock, with dusk coming up, they were across Kew Bridge, and had joined the tail-end of the home-going traffic on the Twickenham Road.

"Quicker this way," said Alex, "until they've finished messing about with the flyover on the Great West Road. Trouble is, everyone else knows it too. Let's try a short cut."

He swung expertly across the traffic, and turned into a long road of neat houses, with neat gardens and neat cars in neat garages. At the far end of the road, the street lamps petered out, and they came to a halt in an area of allotments and high fences.

"It's a dead end," said Jane.

"Not the last time I came here, it wasn't," said Alex. "Let's have a squint at the map. It's in the pocket."

As he leaned over her, she felt the needle go into her arm. For a moment, she thought it was an accident—that a loose pin in Alex's coat might have stuck into her. Then she realised what had happened, and started to fight, but Alex was lying half on top of her, his thick leather driving glove feeling for her mouth.

A minute later the boy sat back in his seat, and relaxed cautiously. He had given her a full shot of pelandramine. She'd

be out for an hour, and dopey for another hour after that. So, no hurry.

He looked at himself in the driving mirror; and was pleased with the unexcited face that looked back. He stripped off the driving gloves and felt his own pulse, timing it with his wrist-watch. Eighty-four. Twelve faster than it should be, but not bad. He took out a comb, and ran it through his hair.

Then he examined the girl. Her mouth was open and she was breathing noisily. Her cheeks were flushed. Anyone looking at her would think that she'd been drinking too much, and had passed out. Just the job.

He felt in the right-hand door-pocket and took out a small bottle of gin. A few drops round her mouth and chin. A little spilt on her dress. Enough for people to smell it, if he was stopped.

He opened the door. There was no one in sight. He threw the gin bottle and the empty syringe over the fence, got back, turned the car, and drove off slowly the way he had come.

The mist was thicker. At the Slough roundabout he took the Staines road, driving carefully now. He crossed Staines Bridge, following the Egham Road. At Egham, the road forked. The main road, with its string of garages, its traffic and its orange neon lighting went away to the left. The right fork, a much smaller road, followed the river towards Windsor. In summer, this road too would be crowded with traffic heading for the open spaces of Runnymede Meadow. Now on a damp February night, it was empty.

Half a mile along, Alex turned out his headlights, and drove very carefully off the road and on to the rough grass. There was some danger of getting the car bogged, but his town-and-country studded tyres would grip on most surfaces. There was a worse danger. Somewhere ahead was the Thames, its bank unprotected by any fence.

Alex stopped the car, got out, and walked forward, counting his paces. It was fifty yards to the bank. He came back, climbed in, and drove the car forward cautiously in bottom gear.

When he stopped again, he was five yards from the edge. At this point, where the bank curved, it had been revetted with concrete bags against the sweep of the winter floods. A yard below his feet the river ran cold, grey and sleek.

Alex walked back to the car. Jane had slumped over sideways, so that when he opened the door she nearly fell out. He got his hands under her body, and lifted her on to the wet grass.

Alone, islanded by the mist, touching the girl's body, moving

it, arranging it, gave him a sense of power, near to exultation. He crouched beside her for a full minute to let the singing noise in his ears die down and the lights stop flashing in front of his eyes. Then he got up slowly, went round to the back of the car, opened the boot and took out two fourteen-pound kitchen weights and a coil of odd-looking plaited cord.

With the cord he tied Jane's wrists together in front of her, passing the ends through the handles of the weights and knotting them.

When he stood up, he saw three pairs of yellow eyes looking at him through the mist. He thought, for a moment, that it was his imagination playing him tricks again. Then he heard the engines, growling to themselves, as the cars bumped across the grass in low gear, closing in on him from every side.

He bent quickly, hoisted the girl on to his shoulders and walked to the bank.

A man's voice shouted urgently, and an orange spotlight flicked on.

Alex humped his powerful shoulders, threw the girl ahead of him into the water, and jumped after her. Whilst he was still in mid-air, a second body flashed past him.

JANE came up out of a tangle of nightmare, of darkness and cold, of lights and noises, into the reality of a hospital bed. The sun was slanting through the uncurtained window, and Sergeant Wilmot was perched on a chair beside her.

"Good morning," he said. "Are you ready to talk?"

"I'm all right," said Jane. "I'll get dressed, if you can find some clothes for me."

"The doctor says he'll let you out in a day or two, if you're good. Let's have the story."

She told him what she could remember, and Sergeant Wilmot wrote it down in his round, schoolboy hand.

"I felt the needle go in my arm," she said. "I don't really know what happened after that."

"Alex took you in the car to Runnymede, and pitched you into the river. Having first tied a couple of kitchen weights on to you. I wonder how many of his girl friends he's got rid of that way before?" He pulled a length of cord out of his pocket. "Simple, but you've got to hand it to him. It's clever. It's made of paper. Twenty or thirty separate strands of it, plaited tight together. Strong enough—but it'd melt after you'd been a day or two in the water."

Jane shuddered uncontrollably, and Sergeant Wilmot said, " I never had much tact," and put the cord away.

" Who pulled me out? "

" I did," said Wilmot. " It's the sort of thing you sometimes get a medal for. We were on your tail the whole way. If it hadn't been for the fog and the mess-up on Staines Bridge we'd have been close enough to stop you going in the water."

" What's happened to Alex? "

" He in the hospital at the Scrubs. In a private room. And that's where he's going to stay until Patrick gets back."

" Haven't we heard anything yet? "

" He's been off the air for nearly forty-eight hours. He'll turn up. Don't worry."

" Who said I was worrying? "

" You looked worried. Just for a moment. It might have been wind, of course."

Jane laughed and said, " If I'm going to be kept here, you can do something for me. Get me those photo-copies of Jerry Light's diary pages, and a classified directory of London. I've had a hunch and I want to work it out."

When Wilmot had gone, she stretched luxuriously, and then settled down into the warm trough of the bed. She liked the way Wilmot called Petrella, Patrick; and she wondered if she'd ever be able to do it herself. A minute later, she was asleep . . .

At eleven o'clock on the following morning, the door of her room opened. Jane, who was deep in a Street Directory, her bed covered with slips of paper, said, " Put it down on the bed-table, could you, nurse—" looked up, and saw that it was Petrella.

" Hullo," she said.

" As soon as my back's turned," said Petrella, " you have to go and do a damn silly thing like that."

" Listen, who's talking," said Jane. " What have *you* been up to? And what's wrong with your leg? "

" Someone tried to run me over. I rolled down a bank on to a railway."

" Well I fell into a river. That's not much worse."

They both laughed. Petrella sat down on the end of the bed, and said, " You know why they had to shut your mouth, don't you."

" Something about those books. I couldn't work it out."

" Listen, and I'll tell you. In 1951 two men were sentenced at the Exeter Assizes for assaulting a bank manager. One was our friend Jerry Light of Islington. The other was one of the managing directors of the demolition firm he worked for. A man

called Alwyn Corder, who disappeared so efficiently that even our Sergeant Edwards couldn't trace him. Because the simple explanation eluded us all. When Corder came out of prison, *he changed his name to Velden.* All legal and above board, by deed poll, registered in the High Court. I checked it this morning. And in that name, he married Constantia Marchant, Douglas Marchant's sister. It was a business alliance. Douglas was his fellow director in the demolition firm."

"I see," said Jane. "Yes. I see." A lot of tiny little pieces were falling into place, and a certain pattern was appearing.

"There's a lot that isn't clear yet," said Petrella. "But the outline's there. Douglas Marchant, and Alwyn Corder, his brother-in-law, *now known as Kenneth Velden*, and their old foreman, Jerry Light, are the three people who started this racket, and ran it. That's for sure. Then Velden died. The other two couldn't simply hang on to his share. They paid it over to his widow."

"Then Douglas *is* head of the whole affair?"

"It's got to be proved."

"And it would help to prove it, if you could show that he was still keeping in touch with Jerry Light."

Petrella grinned, and said, "Cough it up."

"Cough *what* up?"

"Whatever it is you've discovered."

"All right. It's this diary you found in Light's desk. The entries are meeting places—they're pubs. *Rsg Sn* is the Rising Sun. *Wdmn* is the Woodman, and so on. The letter and numbers after the pub are the postal district, and the last number's the time of day. That's what first made me think they must be pubs, because the times are all between eleven and two, or six and ten."

Petrella got up, and stood for a long moment staring down at her.

Then he said, "That's very good indeed," limped across to the door, and went quietly out, shutting the door behind him . . .

"Douglas Marchant," said Petrella to Baldwin, "makes windows. The windows go into new buildings, all over England. In any big building project, the sub-contractors all get paid on the same day in the month. Therefore there must be a lot of money in the main contractors' bank the day before. That's how the intelligence system works. When the bank has been chosen, a gang of specialist safe-breakers do the actual work. Jerry Light gives them their instructions, and their kit. And his

men collect the appropriate rake-off after the job's over. That's what the Franks brothers were waiting for, in Slough, that morning after the robbery."

"How are we going to prove all this?"

"*If* we could get one of Jerry Light's boys to sing, he *might* give us Light. *If* we hooked Light, he *might* give us Marchant."

"You don't sound very hopeful."

"They're going to be a tough bunch to drive that sort of wedge into. They've been working together too long, and they know each other too well."

"Have you any better ideas?"

"Yes," said Petrella, slowly. "I have got an idea, but it's so irregular that we're going to need all the backing the A.C. can give us. First, I want Jerry Light's phone tapped."

Baldwin made a face. "You know what they think about that, don't you. Anything else?"

"That's just a start," said Petrella. "The next bit really is a bit hot. Now, listen—"

AT London Airport the loudspeaker in the Arrival Lounge said, "We have a message for Mr. Douglas Marchant, believed to be travelling from Dortmund. Would Mr. Marchant report to the reception desk?"

Douglas hesitated for a long moment.

If things really had started to happen, might it not be wisest to turn straight round and take the next aeroplane back to Germany? He rejected the idea as soon as it occurred to him. It was by abandoning careful, pre-arranged plans and acting on the impulse of blind panic that people gave themselves away and got caught. He marched firmly up to the reception desk and smiled at the girl behind it.

He produced his passport. "I understand you have a message for me."

"Mr. Douglas Marchant? Would you telephone this number? You can use the telephone in the office, if you wish."

"Thank you," said Douglas. He dialled the number, which he recognised as his sister Constantia's.

"Douglas. Thank heavens, you're back. I didn't know where to get hold of you, so I had to leave a message at the Airport."

"What's happened?"

"Alex and Jane Orfrey have both disappeared. And they've taken the car with them."

"When did this happen?"

"Two nights ago. I've been so worried."

"You've told the police."

"Of course. But they've done nothing. They even suggested—" Douglas heard his sister choke—"that they might have eloped together."

"I suppose it's possible."

"Don't be absurd. Alex was a chauffeur—a mechanic—"

"And Jane was your secretary."

"That's different. She was a girl of good family."

Douglas was about to say something flippant, when he realised that his sister was upset; and being upset, might do something stupid.

"I'll make some inquiries," he said. "I'll ring you back as soon as I have any news for you."

As soon as he had rung off, he dialled another number. The girl who answered the telephone said, "Who's that? Mr. Wilberforce. I'll see if Mr. Simons is in." And, a few seconds later, "No, I'm sorry. He's just gone out. Can I get him to ring you back?"

"Don't bother," said Douglas. "When he does come back, would you give him a message. Tell him that I got the letter he sent me on the third of March."

"Rightchar," said the girl.

As soon as she had rung off, she walked through to the inner office, and said, "That was Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Simons. You did say you weren't in if he telephoned."

"That's what I said," agreed Mr. Simons, a short, sharp-looking man in thick bi-focals. "And that's what I meant. Did he leave a message?"

"He just said that he got the letter you sent on the third of March."

"You're sure he said the third of March."

"I'm not deaf yet," said the girl.

"All right," said Mr. Simons. "Plug a line through to this telephone, and you can go to lunch."

"'Tisn't lunch-time."

"Then go out and buy my cigarettes."

Mr. Simons listened until he heard the outer door shut, drew the telephone towards himself, and dialled an Islington number.

Jerry Light, who answered the telephone, said, "'You're sure it was the third of March he said? All right. Thanks very much," and rang off. He opened the drawer of his desk, extracted the diary that lay there, and opened it at the first week in March.

Then he looked at his watch. It was just after twelve. He

crammed a hat on his head, went down the outside staircase into the yard, said—" Watch things, Sammy. I'm going out—" to the shaggy young man who was sawing a length of timber, and set off at a brisk pace. He seemed to be walking haphazard, choosing small empty streets. But his course was steadily north-east.

One o'clock was striking when he went through the door of a small public house in the neighbourhood of Hackney Downs, said, " Wotcher, Len," to the landlord, and walked through the serving area into the private room behind.

Douglas Marchant was sitting in front of the fire, nursing a glass of whisky. He indicated another glass, ready poured, which stood on the table.

Light said, " Ta," took a drink and added, " you saw the news."

" That's why I came back from Germany. All that the papers said was that Alex got out of the hospital at the Scrubs yesterday morning and clean away. No details. It mightn't be true."

" It's true all right," said Light. " He telephoned me this morning."

Marchant's lip went up. " At your place?"

" No. He had sense enough not to do that. He got me through Shady Simons."

" Did he tell you how he got picked up?"

" He thinks it was just bad luck. A police patrol car spotted him tipping the girl into the river."

" I don't believe in bad luck like that," said Marchant. " Do you?"

" Not really," said Light. " I think they're moving in on us."

" What did Alex want?"

" A place to lie up in. He spent last night on the Embankment. And for you to get him out of the country."

" Or what?"

" So far, he's kept his mouth shut. If he did decide to talk, he could tell them a hell of a lot they want to know."

Marchant drank a little more whisky. " We'll have to do something about him," he said. " The only place he'd be safe, would be in East Germany."

" I can think of somewhere that'd be a damned sight safer," said Jerry.

A red coal dropped from the fire. The clock on the mantle-shelf ticked. In the bar, Douglas could hear the landlord saying, " Nice sort of day for March," He had said it to every customer who came in.

Douglas finished his drink and got up. He said, "I think you're right. We're going to pack up this lark soon. We don't want any loose ends. I've got to go and hold my sister's hand. She's having hysterics. We'll go out the back way."

As the two men emerged from the alleyway, a girl approached them. She had a collector's tray of little red and white flowers. "For the Cottage Hospital," she said. She was a nice-looking girl. Douglas felt in his pocket, found half a crown, dropped it in her tin, and said, "Keep the flower. You can sell it again."

The girl said, "Thank you, sir." Douglas noticed that she had an outsize flower with a black centre pinned on to the shoulder of her dress.

AT nine o'clock that night, Jerry Light left his flat in Albany Street and walked to the garage where he parked his car. The attendant said, "She ought to be all right now."

In the act of getting into the car, Light paused, "What do you mean, *now*?"

"Now the distributor-head's been fixed."

"I didn't tell you to do that."

"It wasn't us. The man came round from the makers with it. He fixed it himself."

"Oh," said Light. "Yes. Of course. I'd forgotten about that. He fixed it, did he. Come to think of it, I won't be needing the car just now. I've changed my mind."

He left the garage, hailed a taxi, and was driven through Regent's Park to Clarence Gate. Here he dismissed the taxi. Five minutes' quick walk brought him to a row of garages in a cul-de-sac behind Baker Street station.

Light was tolerably sure that no one knew about his second car. It was a new M.G. Magnette, with a capacious boot, in which he had stored two bulging suitcases and a hold-all. He had rented the garage in another name, had installed the car in it three months before, and had not visited it since.

The only trouble was that it was now raining so hard that it was difficult to keep observation as he walked. He didn't think anyone was following him, but was not quite sure.

He backed the car out and drove slowly into the park, which he proceeded to circle twice. Headlights showed, blurred by the rain, in his mirror. Cars overtook him. Cars passed him. At the end of the second circuit he was reasonably happy, turned out of the park at Gloucester Gate, and headed north.

"He's making it damned difficult for us," said Wilmot into his car wireless. "I wish he'd used his first car. I'd got that

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fixed nicely. All we'd have had to do then would be sit back and track him on the radio repeater. Over."

"Count your blessings," said Petrella into his wireless. "If it wasn't raining so damned hard, he'd probably have spotted us already. Over and out."

Jerry Light drove steadily up Highgate Hill, across the North Circular Road, and on towards Barnet. His plan was very simple. He was not a believer in elaboration. His instructions to Alex had been to come by Underground to High Barnet and then to walk out on to the main North Road and along it for a quarter of a mile, past the Golf Course, timing himself to get to the point where the road forked by eleven o'clock. He was to come alone, and make damned sure he wasn't followed.

Light looked at his watch. He was in nice time. Five minutes to eleven, and that was High Barnet station on the right. The rain was coming down like steel rods. Alex must be getting very wet.

Light followed the main road past the Elstree fork. There was very little traffic. A couple of London-bound cars came towards him over the long swell of the hill. There was nothing behind him as far as he could see.

His headlights picked out Alex standing by the roadside.

Light changed down, and crawled to a stop beside him. Leaning across, he turned down the far side window. He used his left hand to do this. His right hand was resting on the floor of the car.

"That you, Jerry," said Alex. "I'm damned wet."

"It's me," said Light. He brought up his right hand, and shot him twice through the chest at point blank range.

Alex jerked back on to his heels, went down on to his knees, and fell forward, his face in the water which was cascading down the gutter.

Resting his forearm on the ledge of the window, Light took careful aim, and shot again.

The repeated detonations had deafened him, and he could hear nothing. The first thing he noticed was that headlights, backed by a powerful spotlight, had come on behind him. He slammed the car into gear, almost lifting it off the ground as he drove it forward.

A siren sounded.

The car behind him was almost on top of him. Light saw, out of the corner of his eye, a minor road to the left, did a racing change-down, and went into a skid turn.

On a dry surface, it would have come off, but the wet macadam

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was like ice. Instead of correcting at the end of the skid, the car swung wildly out of control, went through the fence, wires twanging like harp strings, turned once right over, and smacked into the concrete base of a pylon, dislocating two of the overhead lines and plunging half of High Barnet into darkness and confusion.

SO Petrella came for a second time into the presence of Assistant Commissioner Romer, and came with the consciousness of failure heavy on him.

"I reckoned," he said, "that if we let Alex go, they'd be in a cleft stick. Either they left him in the lurch, in which case he'd split. Or they helped him, and we caught them red-handed. Now Alex is dead, and Light's dead, and we're further off than ever from proving any connection between the crooks who do the work, and the man at the top, who draws the profit."

"Douglas Marchant?"

"Yes, sir. I've no doubt in my own mind that he's the man who founded the organisation. And who runs it."

"It's not just what's in your mind," said Romer. "There's a good deal of concrete evidence, too. That was a nice photograph our girl collector got of him, talking to Light, outside the pub."

"He could explain that, sir. He's in windows. Light's a builder. It could have been an ordinary business chat."

"Light's a criminal," said Romer, "and a man who committed a cold-blooded murder a few hours after meeting Marchant secretly at an out-of-the-way public house. I don't doubt that he could explain the coincidence. Most things can be explained, if you try hard enough.

"Here's another one. Two days ago, Marchant went across to Germany. He visited your old friend, the Baron von der Hulde und Oberath. They had a long talk. The German police have got a man in the packing department. He saw Marchant coming and going, and is prepared to identify him. Last night there was a fire at the factory."

"A fire!"

"Nothing serious. It broke out in the dispatch department, and destroyed all records of dispatches during the last five years."

"I see," said Petrella.

"It's particularly intriguing because our man remembers, four or five days ago, helping to pack and dispatch a drill—to a place called Fyledean Court, near Lavenham, in Wiltshire."

"Did you say a *drill*, sir?"

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"Curb your excitement. It wasn't a drill for drilling holes in metal plates. It was a drill for planting seed potatoes. Curious, all the same, that the dispatch records should have been destroyed immediately afterwards."

"It's going to be even more difficult to prove anything now."

"There's one rule I always follow," said Romer. "When you get a smack in the eye, don't sit down. Get up and counter-attack at once. I spoke to the Chief Constable of Wiltshire before you came in. He's promised to co-operate with you in every way."

"Co-operate in what, sir?" said Petrella blankly.

"You're going down, with the search warrant which I've secured for you, and you're going to turn Fyledean Court upside down."

"But—" said Petrella.

"But what, Inspector?"

"If I *don't* find anything, isn't there going to be the most awful row?"

"I'm prepared to accept that risk," said Romer. "He shouldn't have tried to have my niece drowned. I'm rather fond of her."

PETRELLA drove, while Wilmot read the map.

"We'll go down to Christchurch first," he said.

"I thought we were going to Lavenham."

"We're going to call on Mr. Wynne."

"Who's Mr. Wynne, when he's at home?"

"Mr. Wynne," said Petrella, "was, until he retired, the Manager of the Exeter branch of the District Bank."

"The old boy Light and Corder assaulted."

"That's right," said Petrella. "That's where this story began. I want to hear about it, before we tackle Douglas."

It was a lovely day. The early March sun was bright, but not yet very warm. Spring was round the corner, waiting for its cue.

Wilmot abandoned the map and said, "To hell with it! You know what? You ought to do something about Jane."

"Which Jane?" said Petrella, but the car had swerved a full foot to the right before he corrected it.

"Is there more than one?" said Wilmot innocently. "I mean Jane Orfrey, the girl detective, the pride of the Women Police. The one I pulled out of the river a week ago."

"What do you suggest I ought to do about her?"

"You could always marry her, if the worst came to the worst, I mean."

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Petrella drove in silence for nearly a quarter of a mile, and Wilmot, who knew him better than most people, began to kick himself for having presumed on it.

At last Petrella said, " I've never proposed to a girl. I wouldn't know how to start."

" Not to worry," said Wilmot, relieved. " It's all a matter of technique. You get in front of her, and work your feet up till you're pretty close. Then you distract her attention—and grab her with both hands. Under the arms, high up, is favourite—"

" You make it sound like unarmed combat."

" It is a bit like that. Mind you, you'll find Jane's got a pretty high standard, now she's been kissed by a real expert."

" What expert? "

" Me," said Wilmot. " When I pulled her out of the water, I had to use the kiss of life technique. Smashing. It'll probably go better still when she's conscious—"

" Certainly I remember Light and Corder—" said Mr. Wynne. " It's such a beautiful morning. Let's step out into the garden— I have good cause to do so," he went on. " One of my ribs never really mended. I get a sharp twinge there if I stoop suddenly. Particularly when the weather is cold."

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He was one of those men who look old when they are young, and young when they are old. The lines on his face were the deep lines of age, but his eyes had the brightness, his skin the pinkness, of youth. He's looked exactly like that, Petrella decided, for half a century; like a tough old tree.

"I read all about the assault those two men made on you," he said, "but what interested me most was the suggestion that your refusal to grant this company credit was based on some sort of personal feeling."

"Personal feeling?" Mr. Wynne drew his lips in sharply, then puffed them out again like a goldfish after an ant's egg. "They must have imagined that. Bank managers aren't allowed much personal discretion. All overdrafts are referred to Area."

"But in this case, it was suggested that you refused to recommend an overdraft, on personal grounds. Some sort of quarrel."

"If there was a quarrel," said Mr. Wynne, "it was very one-sided." He stared up at an aeroplane, from Hurn on the cross-Channel run, which was gaining height in a leisurely circle against the pale blue-grey sky. "I can remember the managing director—his name was Marchant, and he'd been in the Air Force—coming to see me in my office one morning. I hadn't quite made up my mind what I was going to recommend. He wanted a very large overdraft, but he had reasonable security, and the company had quite a good financial record. When I said that I should need time to think about it, he got very angry." A slight smile played across the corners of Mr. Wynne's mouth. "Very angry indeed. He said that I'd promised him the money and that I must let him have it."

"And had you?"

"Of course not," said Mr. Wynne. "Are you fond of tomatoes?"

They had drifted to the bottom of the garden. Along the fence which separated the garden from the recreation ground was quite a pretentious greenhouse. The far side was covered with wire netting.

"I have trouble with the children, throwing things," explained Mr. Wynne. "Children seem to be brought up without discipline today. I have forced some early Cardinal Joys—they're pentagams, of course. Would you like to try one?"

"I won't rob you," said Petrella. "You were telling me about Marchant making a scene in your office."

"Yes. He lost his temper, and threatened me. I wasn't impressed."

"When you say he threatened you—do you mean physically?"

"I thought at one moment that he was going to strike me. He went very red, jumped to his feet, and came round to my side of the desk." Mr. Wynne blinked.

"And what did you do?"

"I told him to control himself. After a while he did so, and went away."

"And after that you decided not to recommend him as a suitable subject for an overdraft."

"If you mean that I nursed a grudge against him, you're quite mistaken. I shouldn't allow my personal feelings to enter into a matter like that. It did, of course, occur to me that a man who had so little control over himself might not be the best person to conduct a business. That big fellow there is an Ecballium Elaterium, or squirting cucumber—"

PICKLED gherkins," said Wilmot to Petrella, as they drove north to keep a mid-day rendezvous with the Chief Constable. "Are all bank managers like that?"

"They tend to clothe themselves in the armour of their own rectitudes," said Petrella. "But I should think Mr. Wynne is an extreme specimen."

"No wonder Marchant blew his top. Old Wynne would have saved the banks a few shocks in the last seven years, if he'd been a bit more tactful with him, wouldn't he?"

It was nearly four o'clock when they first caught sight of Fyledean Court. They had taken the Tilshead road, across the wastelands which form the central hump of Salisbury Plain. Then they had dropped down off the escarpment, leaving behind them the barren acres of the Firing Range, back to the civilisation of the Lavenham Valley. It was like coming out of war into peace.

Fyledean Court lay at the head of a long, curving, shallow valley. A private approach road ran north from the Lavenham-Devizes road through unfenced fields of stubble, sloping up to a windbreak of black and leafless trees.

At the turn of the road Petrella stopped the car.

"You walk from here," he said to Wilmot. "Keep out of sight over the crest, and work your way in from behind. Pick up anything you can, whilst I keep 'em busy in front."

He gave Wilmot five minutes' start, then drove slowly down the road to the Court, and rang the bell. A grey-haired woman answered the door, inquired his name in a broad Wiltshire accent, and showed him into a room which might have been a

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gunroom or a library according to its owner's tastes. There were a lot of bookshelves, but very few books; a clutter of catalogues, boxes of cartridges, bottles of linseed oil, and tins of saddlesoap.

He sat there for nearly ten minutes, listening to the life of the house and farm going on around him. A heavy lorry drove up, discharged some load, and drove off again. Then Douglas Marchant came in.

"My housekeeper tells me that you're a policeman," he said.

"Well—" began Petrella cautiously.

"Does that mean I can't offer you a drink?"

"There's no rule about it, but actually I won't have one just now."

"You don't mind if I do," said Marchant, and opened the cupboard beside the fireplace. There were box files on the lower shelves and a decanter and some bottles and glasses higher up.

Marchant helped himself to whisky, put in a long splash of soda, and said, "Well, now."

Both men were standing.

Petrella said, "I'm a Detective Inspector attached to New Scotland Yard. We've been investigating a number of bank robberies, which seemed to us to be connected—possibly organised by the same people."

"They're smart operators," said Marchant. "I've read about them in the papers."

"And I have a warrant to search your house."

Exactly the correct reactions, Petrella observed. Incredulity, followed by anger, followed by an affection of ridicule. But then, he had had ten minutes to think it all out. That was the difference between searching a slum tenement and a gentleman's residence.

"If it isn't a joke," said Marchant, "and you really do suspect me of being connected with these—these bank robberies, would you spare a few minutes telling me why? If this house is full of—er—stolen goods, they'll still be here in ten minutes' time. Incidentally, I suppose that's one of your men I spotted, leaning over the gate at the back."

Petrella said, "Did you know a man called Light?"

"Jerry Light? Certainly. He was my Squadron Sergeant-Major during the war, and came in with me when I started a demolition and scrap metal business after the war."

"Have you seen him since."

"I see him whenever we happen to work on the same contracts. He supplies labour. I supply windows."

"When did you see him last?"

"Two days ago—in London."

"Why did you meet him in an out-of-the-way public house, and not at his office?"

"I do much more of my work in public houses than in offices."

"I don't suppose you met Baron von der Hulde in a public house?"

Marchant looked surprised.

"You keep dodging about," he complained. "I thought we were talking about poor old Jerry."

"*Poor* old Jerry," said Petrella softly.

"You must know—he was killed—a motor smash. The night before last."

"I knew," said Petrella. "I was wondering how you did. It hasn't been in the newspapers."

"One of his employees told a business friend of mine. These things get round very quickly in the trade."

"I'm sure they do," said Petrella. "Does everybody in the building trade also know that if Light hadn't been killed, he would have been charged with murder?"

Marchant stood up, his face went red. "If that's a joke, it's in poor taste. I've told you, Light was a friend of mine—"

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"So was the man he shot. Alex Shaw."

"Alex."

"Or am I wrong? Wasn't it you who found Alex the job as chauffeur to your sister, Constantia."

"Certainly. But—"

"Into whose hands, incidentally, quite a few stolen bank notes seem to have found their way."

"You're confusing me," said Marchant. "And you're going much too fast. You talk about Jerry Light, and the Baron von der Hulde, and my sister Constantia, and her chauffeur Alex, and stolen bank notes. Are you telling me that Alex was a bank robber?"

"Alex was a very rare bird," said Petrella. One half of his mind was occupied with what he was saying. The other half was noticing that Marchant was still standing up, and had put down his empty whisky glass on the table. "He was a professional killer. Not just a muscle-man, like the Franks and Stoker and the other simple hooligans Light employed to run your dirty business for you."

"*My* business?"

"Yes. *Your* business. And that's really the oddest twist in the whole affair. Because, as far as I can see, you made bank robbery your business from motives of personal spite. You had a good, legitimate business, and a bank killed it, so you decided to get your own back on all banks."

Marchant walked over to the cupboard, which still stood half open, took out the decanter, poured himself a second whisky, and then said politely, "Please go on."

"There's not a lot more to it. You were well placed, of course. As a demolition expert you knew all there was to be known about cutting through brickwork and steel. Light, I imagine, was your contact with the professional criminal element. You supplied the equipment, mostly from Germany, organised the whole show, and took—" Petrella's eye wandered round the room for a moment—"I would guess, a very handsome share of the profits."

Marchant said, "Is that your curtain line? I'm sorry. Really I am. I haven't met anything more fascinating since I stopped reading comics. Now—get on with your search, apologise, and be off with you."

The door opened, and Wilmot looked in.

"Sorry to interrupt," he said. "But I thought you ought to have this at once," and he thrust a piece of paper into Petrella's hand.

Petrella read it and said, "Thank you, Sergeant. Don't go away." And to Marchant, "That potato drill *that's just been delivered.* When you declared it at the Customs, did you tell them about the other piece of machinery?"

"What other piece?"

"Sergeant Wilmot hasn't had time to make a close examination, but he says that there appears to be a second piece of machinery screwed to the framework, inside the larger piece, and painted to resemble it. It looks like a high speed metal drill. Curious requirement for a farmer."

"If there is, I know nothing about it."

"It would be an excellent way of bringing stuff into the country. You'd need some co-operation from the German manufacturer, of course."

"On a level," said Marchant, "with your other fairy stories." But he was sweating.

He's getting ready to jump, thought Petrella. But which way? There are two of us here, now. I'm nearer the window. Wilmot's between him and the door.

"If you'd care to look at the declaration that I made to the Customs—" He opened the cupboard door, and took out a box file. The whole of the back of the cupboard hinged inwards. Marchant went through it, and slammed the door behind him.

Petrella jumped at the same moment, but he was a fraction of a second too late. The cupboard door was shut, and immovable.

"Out into the passage," he said.

Wilmot grabbed the handle, and pulled, but that door was fast. The mechanism at the back of the cupboard must have bolted the passage door as well.

"Damn it," said Petrella. "He had that lined up, didn't he?" As he spoke, he was looking round for a weapon. There was a poker in the grate, but it was too small to be much use. He opened a long cupboard and found a twelve-bore gun in it. He made sure that it was unloaded, then grabbed it by the barrel and swung the butt at the window. It was a narrow, leaded casement, and it took five minutes to beat an opening through it. Wilmot went first, and dragged Petrella after him. As they reached the farmyard, they heard the aeroplane, and saw it taxi-ing out of the Dutch barn two hundred yards away.

"It's a Piper Aztec," said Wilmot. "Lovely little job. I spotted her as I came in. Take off and land on a tennis court."

"We ought to have thought of that," said Petrella. "With his record—an aeroplane was the obvious thing."

They could only stand and watch. The silver toy swung

round, nose into the wind; a sudden burst of power, and it was away.

"We'll try the telephone, but I don't mind betting it's disconnected. The whole thing was laid out like a military operation. He went twice to that cupboard. Twice, in front of my eyes, to put me off my guard."

The plane was circling to gain height, and swung back almost overhead.

"Once he gets to Germany we can whistle for him. Come on."

Wilmot didn't seem to hear him. He was still staring after the dwindling plane. "He won't get to Germany," he said. "I emptied his main tank. There'll be enough in the starter tank and Autovac to get him airborne. He'll be lucky if he gets as far as the coast."

The dipping sun touched the starboard wing-tip of the plane, and a tiny spark of light winked back at them.

PETRELLA cut out the extract from the *New Forest Advertiser*, and pasted it carefully into the guard book.

UNEXPLAINED FATALITY

The Piper Aztec two-seater aircraft, registration G/XREZ, which crashed on Tuesday evening at Christchurch has now been identified. The pilot, who died in the crash, was Wing Commander Marchant, D.F.C., of Fyledean Court, who has been farming in the Devizes locality for some years. Wing Commander Marchant was a popular figure locally and a generous contributor to Service charities.

The cause of the accident has not yet been ascertained, but eye-witness' accounts speak of the engine having cut out, which would suggest a mechanical defect or fuel stoppage. The pilot was evidently trying to land the aircraft on the local recreation ground. Tragically, he failed in the attempt by a few yards only, and crashed in the back garden of a Christchurch resident, Mr. Alfred Wynne, a retired Bank Official. His extensive tomato and cucumber house was entirely demolished.

This appeared on the same day that Petrella announced his engagement to Jane Orfrey.

© Michael Gilbert 1964

Margaret Bonham's new thriller complete in next month's Argosy.

Leisure-Pleasure

Here we give you the key to arm-chair authority on trout plus the wine to go with it—and the very latest in the world of books and fast cars.

TO be quite clear at the outset, there are trout—and there are trout. For instance, there is a notable difference between the fighting fish caught when the shadows are lengthening and brought straight to the kitchen, and the artificially fed lack-lustre animal fished out of a tank. Salmon trout are in a class of their own; some people regard them as better than salmon, and a soufflé made from them is wonderful. Smoked trout again are something quite different, so there is no one particular wine to suit all trout dishes.

Starting with the smoked trout; it goes admirably with a really dry chilled sherry, such as La Ina, Pedro Dry, or San Patricio. An alternative, if in an expensive mood, would be that wonderful pale golden Jura wine Château Chalon, which tastes rather like an unfortified fino Sherry. It costs about 32s. per bottle.

In choosing wine to go with trout, surely it is sound policy to look first at the wines of the regions famous for their trout fishing. The Loire and its wide range of delightful light wines comes immediately to mind, from a dry, fresh Muscadet at under 10s. per bottle to a 1961 Pouilly Blanc Fumé Château du Nozet at about 23s. The streams of Alsace hold some sporting trout, while the lovely Jura country round Arbois and Champagnole has some of the best trout fishing in France, both in streams and lakes. Riesling d'Alsace, at about 13s., is an aristocrat of wines and worthy of matching with the trout you have caught yourself. And there is nothing wrong with the dry white Sylvaner at 10s. In the Jura they choose a Blanc de Blancs, Côtes du Jura, or a Pelure d'Oignon d'Arbois to go with their trout. Asher Storey and Kettner's have these unusual and delightful wines costing respectively about 11s. and 17s. per bottle.

There is some fine trout fishing to be had in the upper waters of the Lot, and here again there are local wines that are both appropriate and pleasant. The trouble is that they are difficult to come by in Britain, but both Asher Storey and Kettner's have the delightful Crepy from Savoy at about 18s., which comes from vineyards overlooking the Lake of Geneva. The Jurançon Sec Blanc de Blanc from the foothills of the Pyrenees, would make a pleasant alternative.

Most of the young, dry, light German wines go well with trout, but avoid the fuller, richer hocks.

All the wines mentioned so far are white, but there is one red that is new to the British market and suited to this versatile fish. Obtainable from Kettner's, it is a 1959 Morandell Kalterersee Auslese. There is one important point to be remembered. It must be chilled, and so must the white.

OUR MAN IN THE KITCHEN!

Trout, although full of flavour, is at its best when simply cooked. And it is a simple matter to prepare, as in—

TRUITE MEUNIÈRE:

1 trout a person; a little milk and flour; butter (allow two ounces a fish); chopped parsley; salt and pepper; wedges of lemon.

Dip the cleaned fish in milk and then lightly in flour. Melt the butter in the pan and cook the fish gently in the butter—four minutes each side. Remove the fish to a hot plate, season with salt and pepper. Toss the chopped parsley in the hot pan and pour the hot butter with the parsley over the fish. Serve with the lemon wedges and a green salad as a side dish. Try to find time to grill some mushrooms while the fish is cooking. Delicious!

TRUITE EN CHEMISE:

The chemises turn out to be pancakes. So the mixture is better if prepared in the morning, so that it "rests" until wanted in the evening.

Half a cup of plain flour; an egg; a tablespoon of melted butter; half a cup of milk; a pinch of salt and a dessertspoon of brandy. (The brandy is optional).

Mix the dry ingredients, then beat in the egg and add the brandy and melted butter. Then stir in the milk beating everything together until you have a thin cream. Stand aside in a cool place. Cook the pancakes in butter in a six inch pan,

allowing one pancake a person. Keep them warm in the oven while you prepare the fish and its filling.

For this you need : a quarter pound of finely chopped mushrooms; two tablespoons of butter; quarter cup of thick cream (tinned will do); two tablespoons of flour; seasoning and a little lemon juice.

Cook the chopped mushrooms in the butter until they are soft. Sprinkle in the flour and seasoning. Add the cream and stir well. Then cook until slightly thickened. Keep warm. Now cook the trout as in Meunière, and while they are cooking, spread each pancake with the mushroom mixture. Put one trout in the centre of each pancake, and roll so that the head of the fish shows at one end and the tail at the other. Arrange the fish in a heated serving dish; pour over them at the last moment, a little hot melted butter and sprinkle with lemon juice. With a crisp green salad, this is a party dish par excellence.

TRUITE AMADINE:

For this you'll need butter, flour and parsley as before—plus a quarter pound of whole almonds. Blanch the almonds, and shred half of them splitting the remainder. Cook trout as before but add the almonds to the butter, stirring them as they cook until they are golden in colour. Put the trout on hot plates, sprinkle with parsley. Then pour the almonds and the hot butter over the fish.

TRUITE AU VIN BLANC:

This recipe has a great advantage in that you can serve your trout either hot or cold. And you'll need: 1 trout a person; two ounces of butter to each fish; herbs—quantity to taste but a mixture of parsley, thyme, basil or rosemary, marjoram all chopped finely together (an easier way is to buy a packet of mixed herbs); half a bottle of medium dry white wine; salt and pepper.

Blend the butter with the herbs. Clean the trout and put a piece of butter mixture (about the size of half an egg) into each fish. Arrange fish in a buttered oven dish and season. Preheat gas oven at No. 6 or electric at 400 degrees. Pour wine over the fish, cover with a sheet of greased paper, and if you are going to serve the fish hot, stir in a tablespoon of melted butter and cook for another five minutes uncovered. If it is to be a cold meal, don't add the melted butter. Just cook uncovered for another five minutes and allow it to cool in its sauce—which should be like jelly. Serve with salad.

BOOKSHELF:

Leisure-Pleasure reports that there is an unusually pleasing choice in the book department this month.

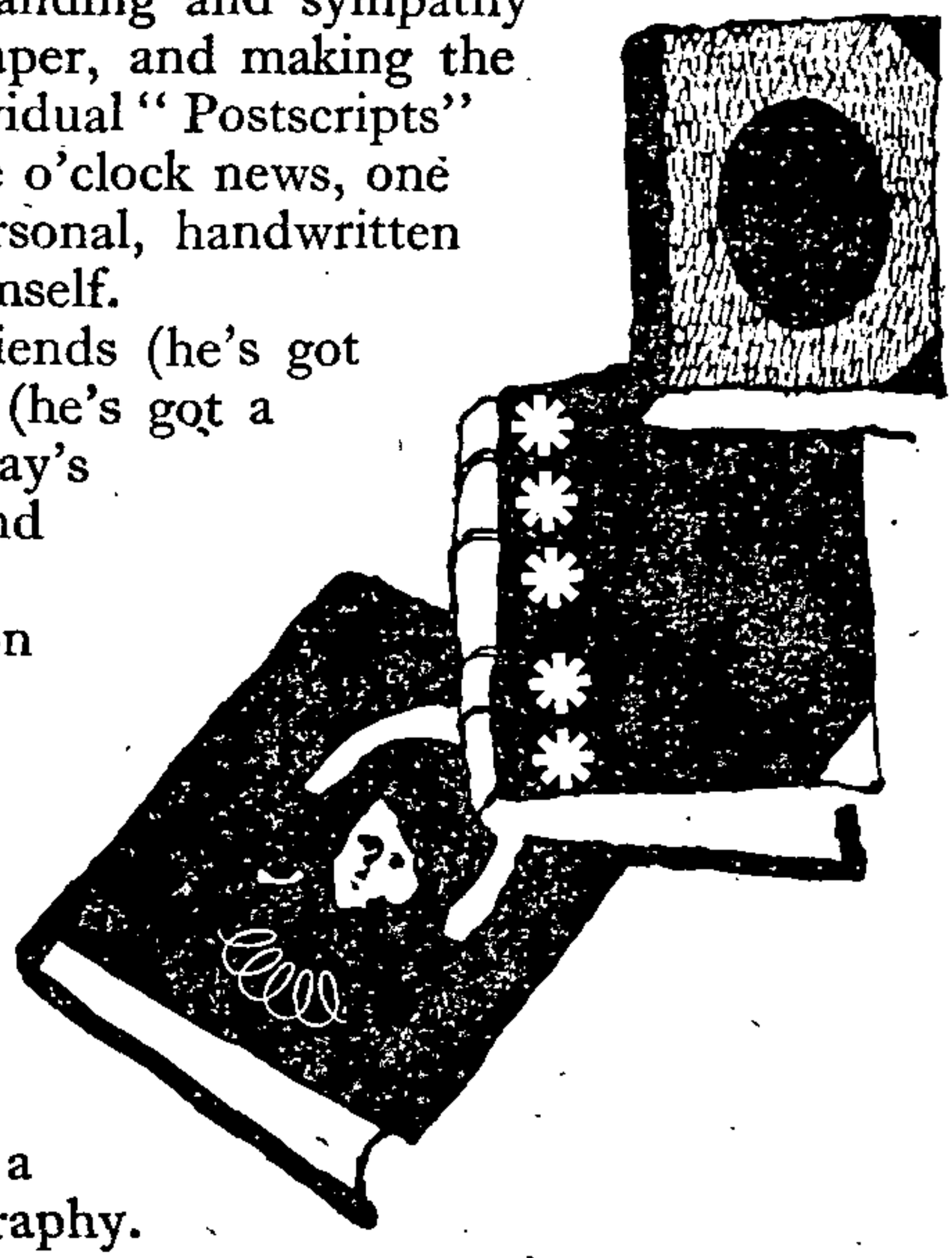
There's **A Pocket Full of Rye**, by Anthony Masters who is obviously young and obviously clever. Should be read if only for the taste it gives of what's to come from this newcomer once he understands about ordinary people and what makes them tick.

His individual titles are splendid lead-ins: Tip Toe Annie; My Mother Said I Never Should; Crooked Ella—are but three.

His fight with a fellow American writer, Westbrook Pegler, and subsequent libel action made Quentin Reynolds front page news a short while back, and incidentally won record damages of a hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars. A lot of money! His autobiography is just out over here, titled with pleasant simplicity, **By Quentin Reynolds.**

It is about his early years as a journalist, covering such cases as the Lindbergh baby kidnapping, through to his war-correspondent assignments, first in Berlin (where he made many enemies among top-ranking Nazis), to the days of the blitz. Then he became one of us, reporting back London under fire with understanding and sympathy to his American newspaper, and making the heartening and very individual "Postscripts" broadcasts after the nine o'clock news, one of which won him a personal, handwritten note from Churchill himself.

Quentin Reynolds' friends (he's got many) and his enemies (he's got a few) include some of today's most exciting people, and the newspaper world is seldom dull. As a person he's neither unnaturally modest nor swollen-headed, and his views on what has been going on around him are worth hearing, although you won't necessarily agree with them. But it adds up to a most enjoyable autobiography.



It's an open secret that Ed McBain's better self is that clever novelist Evan Hunter, so it's not surprising that **Ten Plus One**, his latest write-up of the 87th Precinct Police Division is of far higher quality than most of its kind. This doesn't mean that it's less exciting—there's never a dull moment, and seldom a safe one for these man-hunters.

The murder motive this time is pretty involved and not entirely believable but it makes a rattling good story.

If by chance this is your first McBain, you'll want to know that Penguin are bringing out his old titles, about five of which are now obtainable as paperbacks.

Two of John Le Carré's novels, **Call For The Dead** and **Murder Of Quality,** have been re-issued following the outstanding sales here and in America of The Spy Who Came in From the Cold.

The first was probably a try-out for The Spy—both are good.

From the veteran professional Noel Coward comes another collection of short stories, all pretty long, titled after the first, **Pretty Polly Barlow.** Strictly for those who find The Master irresistible.

What splendid fun Lord Arran must have writing his weekly column and what a pity we can't see his unexpurgated copy as it arrives on the editor's desk before the blue pencil gets at it!

Now someone's had the bright idea of making a selection to bring out as a paperback. Often outrageous but never mean, amusing and serious, and as fresh as new paint, **Lord Arran Writes** makes the best value for money to come our way for a long time.

Should you want to know what it's like to grow up with a black skin, get James Baldwin's **The Fire Next Time.**

The conscience-searing, seemingly insoluble problem of race is inescapably with us at this very moment, and Penguin, who have re-issued this book as a paperback, rightly describe it as a passionately committed account of life in the land of the Free. The author of course is himself a negro.

BOOKS REVIEWED:

Quentin Reynolds, *By Quentin Reynolds* (Heinemann 35s.)
Anthony Masters, *A Pocket Full of Rye* (Secker & Warburg 18s.)
Ed McBain, *Ten Plus One* (Hamish Hamilton 15s.)
John Le Carré, *Le Carré Omnibus* (Gollancz 18s.)
Noel Coward, *Pretty Polly Barlow* (Heinemann 18s.)
Lord Arran, *Lord Arran Writes* (Hodder Paperbacks 2s. 6d.)
James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (Penguin 2s. 6d.)

OUR MAN IN MOTOR CARS WRITES:

The **Alpine** is one of those rare cars—a genuine tourer, well able to leave the miles rapidly behind without any fuss (it has a top speed of just over 97 m.p.h.), and equally at home pottering along around narrow winding lanes.

With the hood tucked away, either speed can give an enormous amount of pleasure, for whatever it may lack in terms of sports car performance, the **Alpine** makes up for by virtue of sheer comfort and refinement.

Today it is a rare and gratifying sight to see a dashboard absolutely full of instruments. What's more, instruments that can be clearly seen as you drive. It is also very pleasant to find all the controls within easy reach when strapped into the well-padded seats with a safety belt. Seating is well thought out with 7-inch of fore and aft movement, and the back is adjustable for rake to almost reclining position. The steering wheel has some 2½-inch telescopic adjustment and even the foot pedals can be adjusted by over 1½-inches. So it will be an odd person indeed who can't fit an **Alpine** !

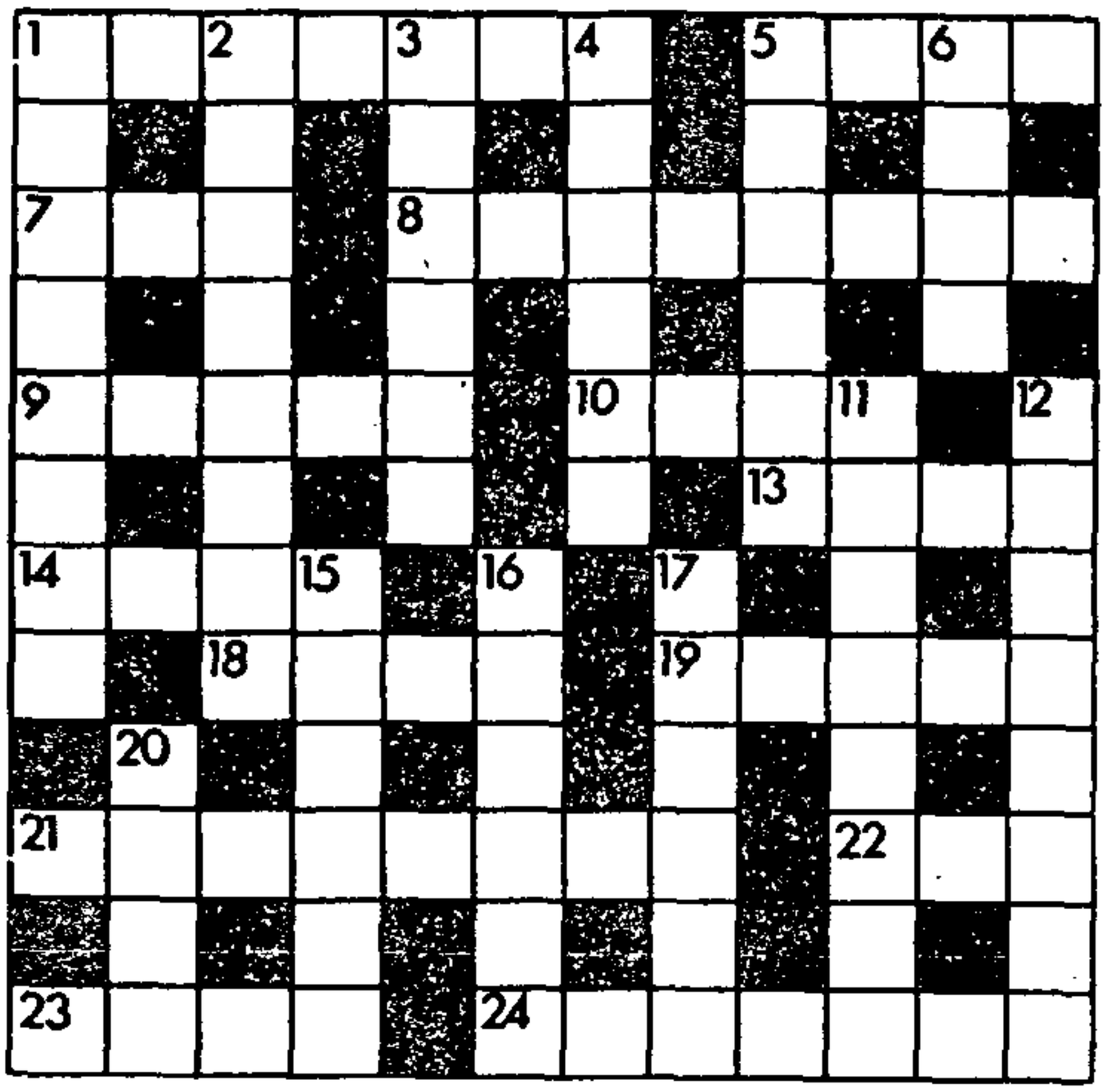
Luggage space is extremely generous for this type of car. Indeed it is good by any standard, with a large boot supplemented by a generous space behind the seats which *can* take a couple of uncomfortable adults but acts like the proverbial jam pot for all young brothers, sisters and their myriad friends who seem to appear as if by magic as soon as you lay a hand on the door handle. In fact, the optional tonneau cover is essential if you and the woman in your life wish to travel unaccompanied!

In addition to the large luggage capacity, there is a reasonable open cubby hole on the passenger's side and, between the seats, a padded armrest that lifts up to reveal a neat compartment for small articles, camera, etc. This, I am glad to say, is lockable—as is the boot.

Not an easy car to fault, it is fast, comfortable and well furnished. It looks very good, handles well and has very impressive brakes—disc front and drum rear. Maintenance is much simplified as all greasing points have been eliminated.

I think my main criticism is of the hood storage. The manufacturers have provided a very weatherproof hood which folds completely away into the body-work and is covered up by hinged panels. But I write this with a large strip of sticky plaster on my finger from a very sharp something in the hood works; and the hood on this test model was showing signs of wear. Better instructions on how to stow and erect the thing should be given.

TEN MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Merry King? (7).
5 Vast host (4).
7 He's a fool (3).
8 More vivid (8).
9 Ship of the line? (5).
10 A near republic (4).
13 Flaubert's girl (4).
14 Jot down a Greek letter! (4).
18 Brink (4).
19 Looks like a body! (5).
21 Quilted covering? (8).
22 Decline (3).
23 Savoury plant? (4).
24 Grapple! (7).

DOWN

1 Like metal (8).
2 Name (8).
3 Slang a policeman! (6).
4 Saluted (6).
5 — and afloat? (6).
6 Lamb-like (4).
11 Cropping up (8).
12 Fairly good (8).
15 Relating word (6).
16 Elected graduate (6).
17 Long, curved implement (6).
20 Where the heart is said to be. (4).

(Solution on page 41)

SOLUTION TO THE PUZZLE ON PAGE 50

9864. Let the numbers be:

A B C D
D C B A

1 4 5 5 3

D cannot be O. Then A + D = 13 and these numbers may be 9 + 4 or 8 + 5 or 7 + 6, since A is greater than D.

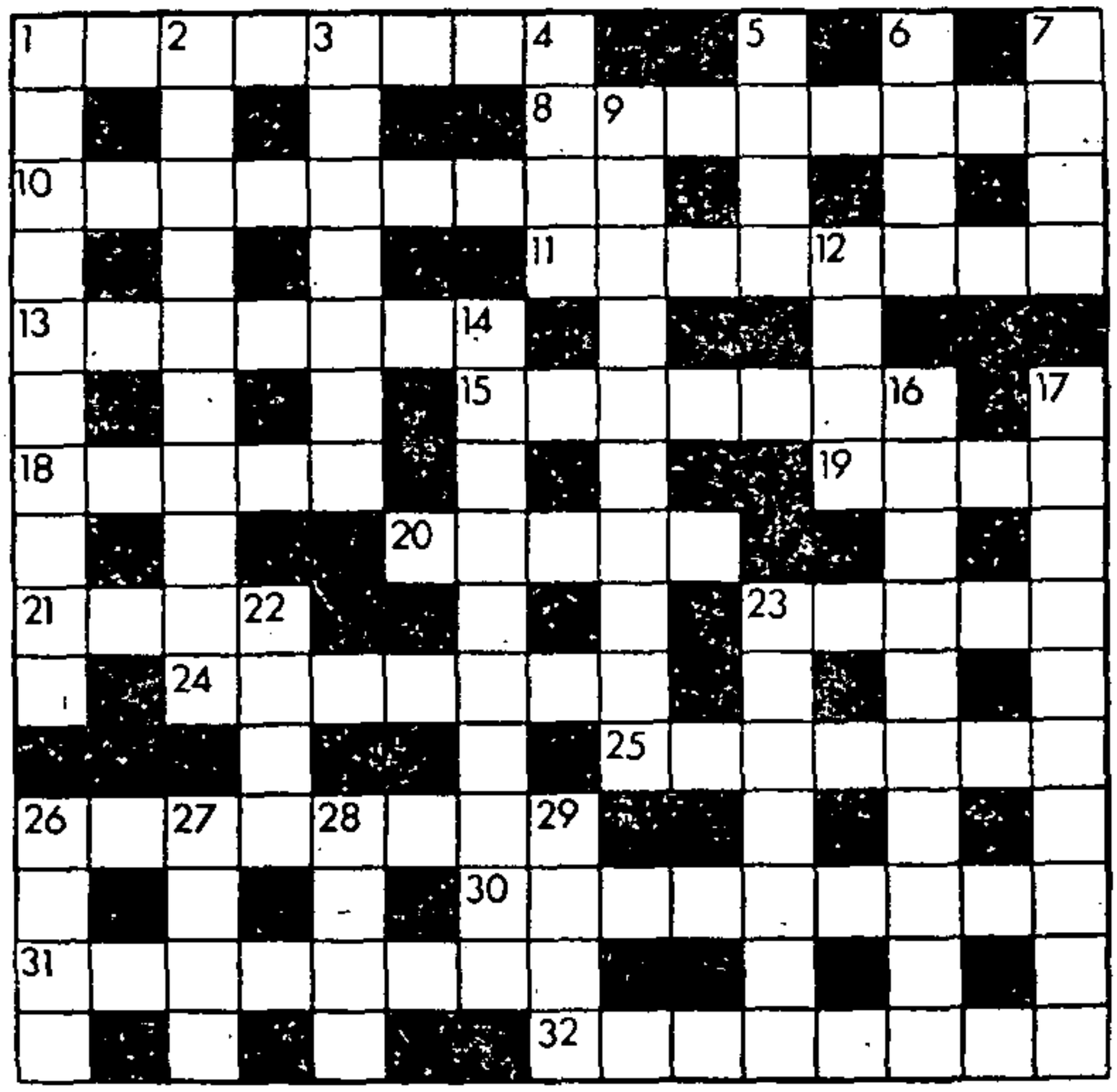
B + C = 14. B cannot be 9, since it is less than A, and it cannot be 7, or less than 7, since B is greater than C.

Therefore B is 8, and C is 6.

Therefore A + D = 9 + 4.

ARGOSY CROSSWORD

Solution next month



ACROSS

1 Obscured? Naturally (8).

8 We try S.O.S. to town near Welsh border (8).

10 Element backing I.R.A.—join Neapolitan society (9).

11 Sell pots lacking in design? (8).

13 Starts to be friendly (4, 3).

15 Frozen headgear worn on peaks? (7).

18 Fleshy, but poisonous to another! (5).

19 Pose for money (4).

20 Nimble yet in age nearly fifty (5).

21 Polish river or German (4).

23 Mother is more than a friend (5).

24 She's first to dress with an artistic finish (7).

25 One handy with a trigger? (7).

26 Diary act for lady columnist? (8).

30 Play set to music? My! I go for an L.P.! (9).

31 This closely guarded lady has a certain smile (4, 4).

32 "Let all things be done——and in order" (1 *Corinthians*) (8).

DOWN

1 Game bet on a ham (10).

2 Best quality drink—for Adam? (5, 5).

3 Knowledge of the upper crust (7).

4 Village in 27? (4).

5 "A fellow of infinite ——" (*Hamlet*) (4).

6 An eyesore (4).

7 Sounds like the voters agree (4).

9 Acts as foil to a plum tree disease (6-4).

12 Quiet drink first—with an iceman? (4).

14 Place at which one has keyboard mastery? (10).

16 Seventy translators supplied this version—all Greek to me! (10).

17 Directors' fees? (5-5).

22 It's risky being stranded (4).

23 Tame rag in Kent (7).

26 Take up quarters (4).

27 South African highlands (4).

28 The kind of journal for motor mechanics (4).

29 A radical couple (4).

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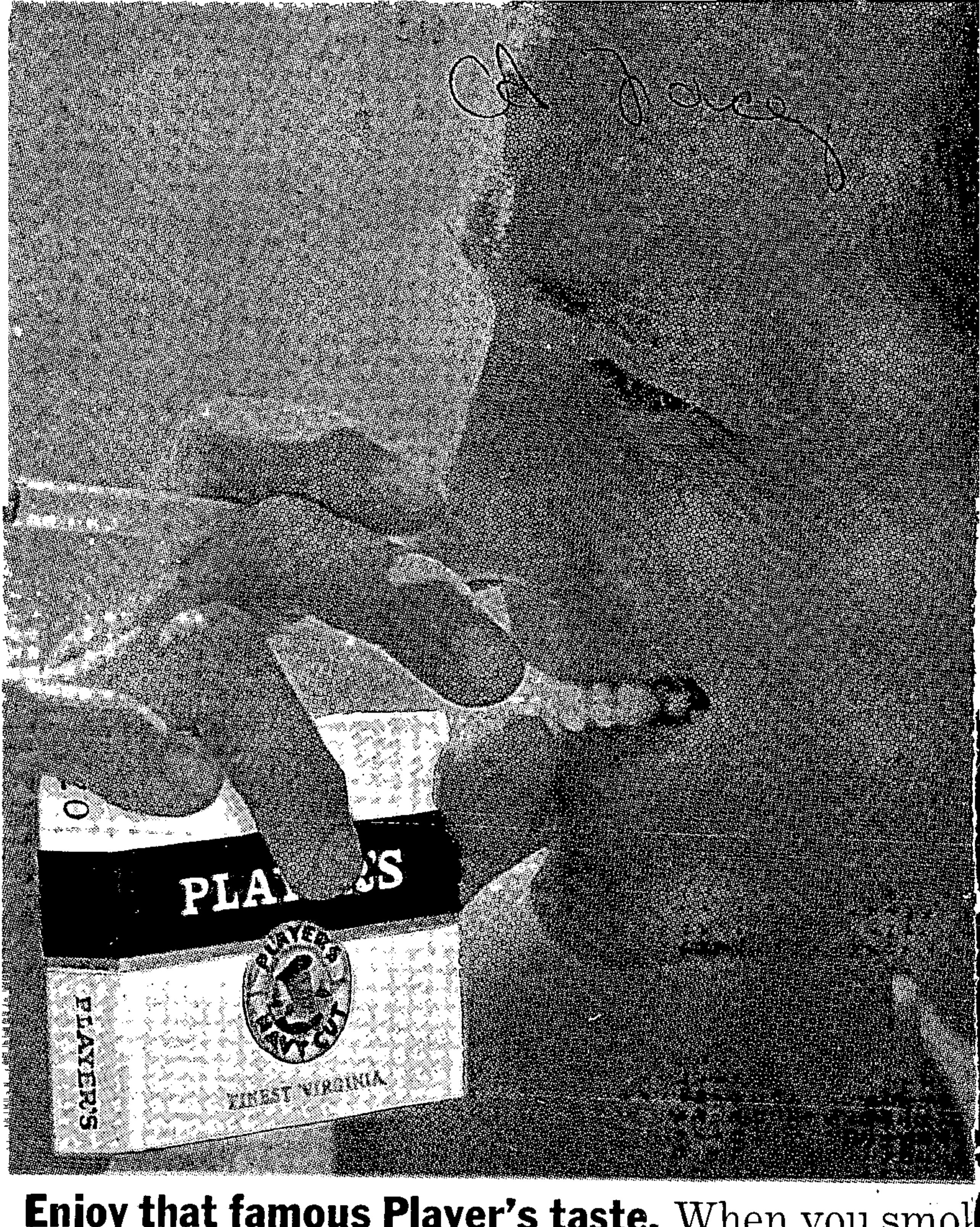

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